

Lobbyists Registration Act

associations under Tier II would have to declare the name of the person lobbying, the employer, and the issue on which they were lobbying. The Minister huffed himself up and said: "Yes, that would be registering lobbying and we do not want to register lobbying; we want to register lobbyists". He is sitting there and, if I am not quoting him correctly, he can shake his head. It is obvious I am reporting it accurately.

Does the Hon. Member see any strength in that argument? Is there any logic to the Minister's argument that we are not out to register lobbying and that is why he would not require disclosure of the issue on which the Tier II lobbyists are lobbying?

Mr. Keeper: Mr. Speaker, I guess this is part of the Alice in Wonderland quality of this legislation. We want to know who the evil doer is, but we do not want to know anything about the evil doing. We want to hear no evil, see no evil, and we sure do not want to register it.

If any Government is going to throw some real light on lobbying in this city, we need to know more than who is doing the lobbying. We have to know who they are doing it for. We have to know what they are trying to get out of the system. If you are here on behalf of the pharmaceutical industry, what is it that you want? The public has a right to know that. We have to know how much you are spending to do it. How big a budget do you have?

We want to know these things because it is not simply enough to know who the lobbyists are. Otherwise all we need is a collection box for business cards. The Prime Minister could have an in basket at his door and as the most powerful lobbyists in this country walk through, they could take their business card out of their wallet and drop it in. That would be the result of simply registering lobbyists and forgetting about lobbying.

I think the Minister's comments in committee laid bare the fact that the Government does not really want to do anything effective about lobbying. It does not want to expose what goes on when the powerful come to Ottawa seeking favours from the Government. Oh, it is nice to have the newspapers report on the activities of spontaneous grass roots groups such as Rural Dignity. Then the Post Office can send out staff and have that group followed everywhere. We will not ask them for their business cards, but we will sure see what they are doing.

That is a double standard. The activities of ordinary Canadians when they protest the policies of government are visible, but when it comes to those who yield enormous influence, those who can get Governments to make decisions against the public interest, we just want to know who they are; we do not want to know what they are doing. All that says is that the Government is not serious when it comes to registering and controlling lobbyists.

If that is the case, then the Government should not be wasting the time of this House in having us here during the summer months to pass legislation that is not going to throw

any new light on what is happening with regard to the making of decisions and the influence that the powerful in this society yield when it comes to the direction of government.

Why does this legislation not ask the Business Council on National Issues or the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers' Association to provide the same information as it does of its friends in the Tier I category, such as Government Consultants International? Why do they not apply a consistent standard across the board? Why is it that the two associations which influence government policy do not have to give information? Why is it that the one group that was able to undercut legislation, that had the support of the vast majority of Canadians, that was able to make the Government go down a road which was unpopular with the vast majority of Canadians, does not have to provide the same information as do other lobbyist groups? Why is it on the Tier II wimp list? Why is it that the one group that told the Government to sell out Canadian sovereignty is not on the Tier I lobbyist list?

• (1700)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Mr. McCurdy: I rise on debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Perhaps the Chair will need the help of the Hon. Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs on this matter. On July 21 the House passed a special Order which said that after Question Period on Monday, July 25, the House would consider third reading of Bill C-82, an Act respecting the registration of lobbyists, and complete the debate on that Act before five o'clock.

The Chair understands that at the time this motion was proposed by the Hon. Minister of State he thought there would be a Private Members' Hour today. There is no Private Members' Hour today, but nonetheless there was an Order made that it was up to the Chair to put the question on third reading of Bill C-82.

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, I am in the hands of my colleagues. I understand that the House Leader had agreed that when the debate was completed we would suspend and come back at six o'clock for the divisions. I am hesitant to keep colleagues here any longer. They have now endured two speeches of some volume and lacking any sense. If we had some assurance that there would not be further abuse for long periods of time, I would certainly not be reluctant.

However, perhaps I can delegate this responsibility to the House Leader who has the unfortunate job of having to deal with the NDP on a day-to-day basis. I would not want to undermine any relationship he might have with that organization, although I cannot understand how anyone can endure that task day after day.