

Watered-down bill good for unions, bad for Canadians

Eric Duhaime – July 3, 2013

Last week, the Canadian Senate made a national disgrace of itself again. It had nothing to do this time with internal mismanagement of public funds and everything to do with lack of transparency and total disrespect for democracy.

Under the leadership of a senator I used to respect, Hugh Segal, 15 other Conservative senators joined the Liberal opposition to literally kill Bill C-377, a piece of legislation adopted last December by the House of Commons that would have disclosed the finances of labour unions.

Here is the list of the unelected accomplice Conservatives: David Braley, JoAnne Buth, Gerald Comeau, Jacques Demers, Norman Doyle, Nancy Greene, Daniel Lang, Don Meredith, Paul McIntyre, Richard Neufield, Nancy Ruth, Judith Seidman, Larry Smith, Betty Unger and Josée Verner.

Those political appointees made the bill useless by adopting mainly three fundamental amendments: 1) Raising the amount for disclosure of any union spending from \$5000 to \$150,000; 2) Increasing the threshold for salary disclosure of union bosses from \$100,000 to \$445,000; 3) Applying the obligation of transparency only to unions with over 50,000 members.

All the arguments used by the senators to distort the bill were heard last year by our elected officials and rightly rejected by our MPs who are accountable to the people.

While the union bosses and their paper, the Toronto Star, were whining “that no other comparable Canadian organization is required to share” as much financial information, someone needed to remind them that no other comparable Canadian organization receives \$3-4 billion every year in compulsory dues that are tax deductible while strike compensation is not taxable.

Responsibilities

With exceptional privileges should also come exceptional responsibilities.

Over 4.3 million Canadian workers pay union dues every month, often against their will. Unions collect 100 times more money annually than all the political parties represented in the House of Commons combined and more than 100 times the amount of money spent by all the employers’ lobbies combined.

A huge amount of those union billions go to political activism for the radical left. Workers who pay need to know how and how much.

A poll conducted in May 2012 showed that 97% of us are supportive of the idea that unions should be accountable and transparent in their financial statements, not only to their members but also to the public.

In the U.S. every union that spends more than \$250,000 annually needs to table two types of financial statements with 47 pieces of specific financial information, 21 non-financial details, and 20 charts. Any worker can freely and anonymously consult the website of the Department of Labour to see where his money goes.

Between 2001 and 2007 alone, this disclosure allowed workers to be reimbursed over \$103 million illegally diverted by their unions and 877 accusations to be laid for corruption and embezzlement.

Unfortunately, 16 Tory senators acted like union bosses' puppets last week. The House of Commons needs to readopt the original bill C-377 as soon as possible and send it back to the senators. This will give workers a voice.

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