

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

SUBJECT MATTER OF QUESTIONS TO BE DEBATED

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order. It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 40, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie)—Health—Effect of certain brands of tooth paste on tooth enamel; the hon. member for Kootenay West (Mr. Harding)—Air Transport—Consultations with manufacturers of DC-8 on spoilers—effect of sonic boom; the hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Carter)—Regional Economic Expansion—Argentina, Newfoundland—Report on effects of closing of United States naval station.

It being five o'clock the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' business as listed on today's Order Paper, namely, Public Bills, Private Bills, Notices of Motions.

• (5:00 p.m.)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION ACT

AMENDMENT TO ESTABLISH OFFICE OF PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSIONER FOR ADMINISTRATION

Mr. R. N. Thompson (Red Deer) moved that Bill C-23, to amend the Financial Administration Act (Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration), be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it has been my privilege to bring this bill to the attention of hon. members on two previous occasions during the last 12 months. In fact, it was before the House for debate on January 13 and October 6 last year and again today.

Hon. members may wonder why I feel so strongly about the need for such an office in the House of Commons. It is not a new idea. I have had the privilege of presenting this private bill in the House in one form or another at least 15 times in the last eight years. This bill is concerned with the establishment of the office of what is commonly known as an ombudsman. This bill would name this special office the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration.

Increasingly, Mr. Speaker, the rights of Canadian citizens are being transgressed. This is basically because of increasing domination of government and governmental affairs on the rights of individual citizens. I am convinced of this, not only because of the correspondence that crosses my desk, but also because of the numerous articles in the press and the numerous comments by members in this chamber and in the provincial legislatures. This has resulted in action by most legislatures in establishing the office of ombudsman. It is necessary that we

Financial Administration Act

have this office at the federal level to safeguard the rights of Canadian citizens.

This legislation would add this office to the present duties of the office of the Auditor General. His duties would include those of a parliamentary commissioner or ombudsman relating to administrative matters concerning the federal level of government. It is logical that the Auditor General have such authority. He has stated this to the committee on several occasions, particularly in 1964 when a bill to establish a formal ombudsman was being considered by the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs. When he appeared before the Standing Committee, he stated that he has been called upon to serve in the capacity of ombudsman as it relates to financial matters, taxation problems and other areas where governmental bureaucracy increasingly comes into play in the lives of Canadian citizens.

I think it is very logical that this bill should be considered. I plead with hon. members at this time to agree to refer this bill to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs so that a more thorough examination of the proposition which this bill presents might be considered by this committee. The Auditor General would have the opportunity to explain to the committee the need for such a bill. Members of the committee, and of this House, would have the opportunity to express their opinion on the need for such an office. I wish to draw to the attention of hon. members a few of the principles of the bill.

The bill is intended to give to the Auditor General the function of parliamentary commissioner. In that capacity, it would be his duty to investigate the administration, by a power or authority or officer of such power or authority, of any federal law of Canada whereby any person is aggrieved or, in the opinion of the commissioner, may be aggrieved.

Citizens who believe that they have been aggrieved could appeal directly through their Member of Parliament or they could make direct appeal to the Auditor General acting in his capacity of parliamentary commissioner. It would be the duty and function of each Member of Parliament to decide whether a complaint should be considered for direct reference to the commissioner.

It has been said that we, 264 Members of Parliament, are in effect ombudsmen. I agree with that. However, our powers are limited. We do not have the power of inquiry. Nor do we have the necessary assistance in the area of research to properly handle and investigate many of the problems that come before us. I, personally, know this is the case. When this bill was before the House in October, I mentioned a number of specific cases where it was impossible for me, as a Member of Parliament, to get satisfactory answers to complaints registered with me by certain constituents. I know that all hon. members face this problem.

It is all right to say that we act in the capacity of ombudsman. Very often we are able to render that service. It is our responsibility. On the other hand, there are many instances where we cannot handle the situation because we do not have the authority or because we do not have the necessary time or assistance to make a