

suggestions relating to the spending of money in such fields as I have indicated.

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, I approach this bill with mixed feelings. I can understand what the hon. member is driving at, but I think he has somehow gone adrift in part of it. On the question of the Commissioners of Internal Economy, having occupied the position which Your Honour now occupies and having worked with a number of cabinet members as commissioners, I found it an easy working relationship. However, there must be other ways of approaching this job and I have always felt that the Commissioners of Internal Economy, when it comes to the House of Commons, were there as advisers to Mr. Speaker.

If anybody formally questioned the views or desires of Mr. Speaker, that commissioner would put dissent in writing. This situation never arose, but I can assure hon. members that had it been the case, any commissioner who wished to dissent from the views of Mr. Speaker in connection with the administration of the House would have put his dissent in writing.

I found that there was an anomaly. I share this feeling with the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard). It arises inasmuch as the financial affairs of the House of Commons, by reason of the composition of the commission, were under the direct control of the Minister of Finance. It is now the President of the Treasury Board. When I was Speaker, the Minister of Finance was also President of the Treasury Board; he held both offices. I agree that the House of Commons, if it is to have some working relationship with the government, cannot be given carte-blanche to write its own bill of expenses. In other words, a committee of members ought not to be able to decide that instead of spending, say, \$1,200,000 it would spend an extra couple of million dollars in a particular year.

The position here is far different from that in the United States in connection with the Senate building and the Congress building which are not subject to the same rules; expenditures are under the direct control of the members and the administration has no authority over them. There should be a better meeting ground between the officers charged with the administration of this House and the treasury. Let us look at the present legislation, which states in section 16(1)

The Governor in Council shall appoint four members of the Queen's Privy Council of Canada who

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are also Members of the House of Commons, who, with the Speaker of the House of Commons, shall be commissioners—

I think the interpretation of that statute has been too narrow. At this time there are a number of members of the Queen's Privy Council who could serve on that commission and who would serve on it, I think. In my opinion it would be an improvement over the present position—

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): It could not be worse.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): —and would give better representation to the House if instead of having a cabinet subcommittee as is the case now—I felt this difficulty myself when I was Speaker—it were possible to have contact with hon. members on the opposition side of the House. After all, it was necessary for Mr. Speaker to contact members of the opposition in connection with many of the proposals he made. He felt it was proper to consult representatives of the various parties before he talked with the commissioners. This is why I took the attitude that the commissioners were there to advise Mr. Speaker and to approve of decisions. As I said, formal dissent would have to be expressed in writing. The commissioners were not equal in the decision-making process because the matters dealt with concerned the general administration of the House and because Mr. Speaker had, through the usual channels, consulted members of all parties.

I therefore think it would be better if among the commissioners advising Mr. Speaker—I will always use the term "advising Mr. Speaker"—were representatives of the opposition in the House. If it is felt they should be members of the Privy Council because they would have dealt with matters of this kind before, and that members of the Privy Council are likely to be residing close to Ottawa and to be available to Mr. Speaker when decisions have to be taken rapidly, as is sometimes the case, then so be it. At the present time, strangely enough, the four members of the Privy Council are supposed to give a geographic representation of the House. However, if we look at the geography this is not the case, because you could cover the geographical representation of the Commissioners of Internal Economy with a man's handkerchief.

● (5:40 p.m.)

The President of the Privy Council (Mr. Macdonald) comes from Toronto, the Minister