

any special status because of this bill; this bill merely asks that the same rule apply to all.

Upon election to the House of Commons by an overwhelming majority in 1974, I was confident that some of the inconsistencies in the rules would end. The Canada Elections Act permits Canadians to seek office under the auspices of a recognized political party or as an independent. Upon further reading about this democratic country of Canada, one would gather that to run under the auspices of a political party as a member of parliament one would have to be duly elected at a nominating convention in his or her riding, as I was. But as history now records, this was proven to be purely theoretical and myth in my case. However, that incident in 1974 was caused by a certain party's disorganization and lack of unity and I certainly cannot blame the government side for that.

Upon election to the House of Commons by an overwhelming majority, as I said, I was confident that these inconsistencies would end. This was, indeed, a wrong assumption. The law with regard to an Independent's membership on House and joint committees states, to quote the guidelines of Standing Order 65(1), which virtually ignores political parties:

At the commencement of the first session of each parliament, a striking committee, consisting of seven members, shall be appointed, whose duty it shall be to prepare and report, within the first ten sitting days after its appointment, lists of members to compose the following standing committees of the House:—

A list of committees follows, but no mention is made of party representation on them. However, when I endeavoured to seek membership of standing committees I was advised that they were only for party members. I think the House will agree that the practice followed to appoint committees is certainly inconsistent with the basic principles and traditions of this parliament, but many of the occurrences in this House of Commons have proven that traditions are rarely upheld.

Despite these facts, precedent shows that independent members have been selected for committees in this House. The constituency of Charlevoix-Saguenay was represented between 1942 and 1949 by Mr. F. Dorion who, as an Independent, appears in *Hansard* as a member of the House committee on banking and commerce in the twentieth parliament. Mr. P. E. Gagnon, independent member for Chicoutimi, was a member of the joint committee on printing. The constituency of Comox-Alberni returned Independents as members between the years 1921 and 1953. Mr. L. Gibson, who represented the area from 1945 to 1953, sat on the House committee on marine and fisheries and on the House committee on railways, canals and telegraph lines during the twenty-first parliament.

It appears quite obvious that in fact membership on committees has little or nothing to do with party affiliation, precedent or procedure. It is apparently entirely dependent on whether one's views and policies are acceptable to those in authority. I must say that generally speaking I have endeavoured to do my best to obtain a good rapport and cordial relationship with each and every member here—with a few exceptions, of course—keeping in mind the best interests of my constituents and the nation generally. You have reciprocated with the same high level of co-operation, again with a few exceptions. An

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Independent does, though, have a few freedoms that a party member does not enjoy. There is no question about that. Therefore an Independent does have more time to spend on business for individual constituents. This is not just my humble opinion. Let me quote from a book written by an Independent in the British House of Commons in the year 1963. That member speaks of the benefits of being an Independent when he says:

● (1420)

A party career, an entirely legitimate and praiseworthy aspiration, involves assiduous and prior attention to party matters. I do not say that it is impossible for an M.P. to have a party career and at the same time be an excellent constituency member. It can be done with the aid of extreme self-sacrifice; and it is done occasionally. But it is not easy. If a constituency develops special problems, it is even less easy.

Not only does a party member have a conflict between the claims on his time, but also, when special circumstances arise, he has often an inescapable conflict of loyalties also.

I was elected by the people, as was every other member in this House, and all that I ask in this bill is that I, and future Independent members, have the same freedoms and the same rights that party members enjoy. We sit in this House and pass laws on human rights and the like. This is all well and good. But do you not think that we should begin by cleaning up the act in our own backyard right in the House of Commons, by allowing all members of this House to have the same privileges? I have often been accused, one way or another, by members of this House of being a bigot. May I take this opportunity to say that by not supporting this bill and referring it to committee for the preservation of an individual's rights and the country's democracy, there is certainly more than one bigot in this House.

I could understand the refuting of this bill if it were only for my benefit, but I believe that the growing sense of division within the parties is proof of the fact that there will be many more members running as Independents in the next election. There are many in this House who, in all probability and possibility, could be in that position. They should be cautioned, though. By voting for this bill they may not be protecting their own future rights. They should consider that fact.

Years of service to a political party really mean nothing. My rewards for unremitting and conscientious service to the party system are well known. They can be briefly summarized as a good hard kick in the pants. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I would ask each and every member of this House to consider the implementation of this bill very carefully, and for once not to be guided in their decisions by their party whips but by their own consciences and the thought of their own futures.

There is an obvious injustice inherent in the present practice of the selection of committee members which must be regulated before history shows too many years of such malpractices in an era of a supposed state of absolute democracy in our country. It is time this system of selection was regulated fairly.

**Mr. Cliff McIsaac (Battleford-Kindersley):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a few brief comments in response to the remarks