

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. I simply rise to express my resentment and to question the parliamentary practice of referring to me as being non-partisan in my speeches in this House.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Knowles: Objection sustained.

An hon. Member: A point well taken.

Mr. Fox: For the first time this evening I find myself in complete agreement with the hon. member.

In summarizing this debate I want to say that I think there was indeed a good deal of consensus concerning the principles behind the access to information legislation introduced in the House today. It is indeed legislation which benefited a great deal from the thought and work of many members on both sides of the House. We on this side of the House had the benefit of legislation which had been brought in by the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker). I think we have made a sincere effort to build on that legislation. We do indeed believe, because we had the benefit of that legislation, that we were able to bring forward perhaps a somewhat improved bill.

In looking back at the bill perhaps I could go back to some of the comments made by the hon. member for Yukon when he expressed his skepticism about the fact that there is a bill. If I were sitting in the opposition, I would take great solace from the fact that the government was indeed coming forward with this type of legislation.

If the hon. member wants to speak of latitude and feels that there have been occasions when he did not obtain the information for which he was looking, he will have to admit that with the type of legislation introduced today, the question of latitude is no longer paramount, since a citizen of this country would have the complete right of access and the right to ask the official who is really responsible before the House, the information commissioner, to take on his case and contest any refusal on the part of the government.

So this is indeed a very significant advance which is being proposed to Parliament in this legislation. I think the fact that

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we have found wide consensus this evening is an indication that members want to see progress made.

In the course of my speech at second reading of the bill I indicated that our approach was not a highly partisan approach to this bill but that what we are looking for is as wide a consensus as possible. We wanted to obtain the best bill possible in this area, as we want to do in other areas. However, this is an area where we welcome particularly the input of members of Parliament. I am not saying we have agreed to every amendment that may have been proposed by the other side, but obviously we have given a great deal of thought to reasonable proposals in the area of ministerial responsibility. The government decided to take the route of judicial review. However, we felt there was a possible conflict between the principle of ministerial responsibility and the principle of judicial review. We opted for judicial review. Perhaps there is a slight conflict with the concept of ministerial responsibility, but we did opt for the system which would bring the most openness possible to Canadian government.

I should like to thank all members who have participated in the debate this afternoon. I hope when we get into the committee stage, we will see the same type of positive reaction on the part of the opposition and that they will help us to get the legislation through the committee stage as quickly as possible because it does indeed represent a significant advance in terms of Canadian legislation.

Once again I want to thank hon. members for their contribution to this debate, and I look forward to hearing their comments during the committee stage.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): By order made earlier today, there is no adjournment debate this evening. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 11 a.m.

At 10.05 p.m. the House adjourned, without question put, pursuant to Standing Order.