

*House of Commons Act*

with the problems that face Members of the House, and I should like to outline some of them.

● (1640)

There has been notification of salary freezes for the staff of Members, for example. A lot of decisions that have been passed down to us have been made without prior notification or consultation with Members at large or with the Standing Committee on Management and Members' Services. This is complicated by the fact that the commissioners of Internal Economy meet so infrequently. That is almost a secret group in the Cabinet which makes decisions on the way the House of Commons ought to be administered.

Members have other concerns, and if there were a group that was representative of all Parties, it could probably find more constructive ways to deal with our problems. I am aware of some matters that have been raised by certain Members who have participated in the deliberations of Parliamentarians for World Order. The decision on whether this is a parliamentary group has seemingly been made in a vacuum without consultation or adequate explanation to the Members who have worked hard and devoted their time to the discussion of issues they feel to be important.

Many technological and other changes have occurred in the operation of the House of Commons and I think it is important that Members of Parliament have an input into these decisions. There is the Oasis project which is an attempt to bring the House of Commons into the twentieth century. Members will have an opportunity to examine new office procedures, technological and information systems. If Members were freed from their executive responsibilities in order to make the decisions, then I am sure that after complete hearings better decisions could be made on the implementation of such projects and Members would feel better about the way the House of Commons is administered.

Another concern that has been brought to my attention frequently is the matter of a Member's budget. A common complaint in my caucus is that funds can be used either for salaries or for machines. This irritates many Members who feel there should be a separation of these two items in the budget.

These things have been mentioned time and again in the Standing Committee on Management and Members' Services, but because of the dichotomy and the differences between the commissioners, who operate without direct communication with the Committee, and members of the Committee, a lot of things are not dealt with adequately. Often, after matters have been dealt with by the committee, communication becomes bottlenecked, either through the Speaker or through whatever procedure is being used, and information is not given to all members of the Commission.

It is because of such bottlenecks that I support the substance of the Bill presented by the Hon. Member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert). I wish the subject matter could be referred to the Standing Committee on Management and Members Services by an order of the House. The Committee could then

report back to the House, which could act upon it. I know that many Members have been working hard and diligently on issues that have been brought before them.

A recent concern is that Rogers Cablevision has discontinued the service it had been providing for Members of Parliament. In constituencies such as mine the cable networks are locally operated. I was able to have tapes of the House sent to the local cablevision company so that people in my constituency who cannot receive the proceedings of the House directly, could see at least some of the debates and hear my comments or those of other Members. That service should be reinstated. Concessions were made to Rogers Cablevision by the House in order that it could present such programming, yet if the service is withdrawn we find that there is no way the problem can be dealt with adequately. Such problems do not funnel through to the commissioners for discussion at their rather infrequent meetings.

Members have other concerns. My colleague, the Hon. Member for Broadview-Greenwood (Ms. McDonald) has been troubled by the lights in the House which are far too strong for her. This matter has been raised, but it is not something that can be dealt with expeditiously at the present time. If there was a group of Members which could deal with such matters, the lighting could be changed, as it has been in the Saskatchewan legislature, so that Members would not have to suffer physical discomfort.

Then there is the question of the right of the staff of the House of Commons to have an opportunity to bargain as staff in other Government departments can. Such issues could be dealt with if the ideas in the Bill could be referred to a committee where they could be considered and perhaps changed.

We should examine how matters stand in other jurisdictions. Reference has been made to the United Kingdom model. I like some of the things I have heard about the way the House of Commons is administered there. Perhaps we could incorporate some of its methods. Other jurisdictions have been examined and we could incorporate some of their methods as well.

I should like to close by indicating that we support the general thrust of Bill C-273 although we believe it would require some polishing. We would support the Bill being withdrawn and the subject matter referred to the Standing Committee on Management and Members' Services. Perhaps someone from the Conservative Party, in consultation with the author of the Bill, might negotiate such a move with the Government.

Those are the concerns that I wanted to raise because Members who have served on the Committee are interested in finding a more effective way to serve Members of the House. One way in which we can serve Hon. Members is to ensure that the way in which final decisions are made can perhaps be streamlined and that there is more representation by Hon. Members who do not have Cabinet responsibility and who can devote their time to the type of decisions which would have to be made. These Hon. Members would also, perhaps, have a