

*Private Bills*

points including the procedure followed by the executive in seeking a transformation from provincial to federal charter. I cannot explain, Mr. Speaker, why more information has not been given to hon. members by form of letter or circular from members of the local courts who feel opposed to the bill and to the recent action taken by the executive. This body of opinion exists.

I intend to quote from a circular prepared by the Foresters Information Committee, P.O. Box 636, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Part of this circular relates to internal operations of the organization, but part bears directly on this bill and points out the present mood that exists within the organization towards the executive. I quote:

To the officers and members of all courts of the Canadian Orders of Foresters:

Please have your Court consider the attached Notices of Motion which have been sent to High Court for debate at the High Court Meeting at Edmonton in July, 1969.

I would emphasize the following:

These motions are designed to bring back to our Subordinate or Local Courts and their members the authority that is rightly theirs. There are changes being initiated by the Executive that will, if unchecked, destroy our Court system. The Canadian Order of Foresters will then be a fraternal society in name only.

There are strong feelings on the part of many members regarding this point. I continue quoting:

Surely your Court cannot calmly watch the reduction of our Courts from 700 a few short years ago to somewhere around, or less than, 300 and still reducing in numbers.

Our Executive—

This refers to the headquarters organization of the Canadian Order of Foresters.

—now boast they do not disband Courts any longer. They simply amalgamate them. What a farce that is. Tell that to a Court that has been forced to amalgamate (and we believe most amalgamations are forced) with another Court in another town with which it has no natural connection. Sometimes these areas are 20 -30, 40 or more miles apart. When this happens, that Court has been disbanded.

The circular then goes on to deal with other proposed notices of motion for changes within the internal constitution of the organization. There is one more paragraph contained in this notice to members which I would like to put on the record:

There is no reason why members and especially delegates should not know who attended a High Court meeting, what courts they represented, and their addresses. This information has been refused by High Court. It should be available.

[Mr. Schreyer.]

The net effect of all this, Mr. Speaker, should be to point out to hon. members that there does exist an obvious and significant difference of opinion between rank and file members of this organization. Many members feel rather strongly about the fraternal society aspects of this organization, the function of the local court in the social life of their own town and the prevailing attitude within the executive. I understand the executive is now of the view that they must sell insurance and not bother with the fraternal court aspect of this organization. I do not think we as members of parliament, should take any action that will either intentionally or unintentionally have the effect of siding with one of the two sides in this disagreement.

We should not pass the bill at the present time; it should be left in abeyance for six months until after the biennial convention of this organization in Edmonton. The membership of this organization should decide whatever action they propose to take by majority vote. The results of this vote could be communicated to this house and if it is the intent and wish of the majority of delegates, the bill could be re-sponsored.

I wish to emphasize the fact that the authority which the executive feels it has is being questioned and challenged by some members who have spent many long years in this organization, who have attended conventions and high court meetings for many years, who know the organization intimately and have some feeling of attachment to it. Some of these people feel strongly opposed to the action being taken by their executive and they oppose the passage of Bill S-18 at this time. Do hon. members have the right to deliberately or otherwise show favoritism to one of the two opposing groups?

I do not think it will harm the organization to delay this bill six months. The convention will be held in four months at which time the membership could make their own decisions. Once this matter has been properly decided in their own organization, the bill requesting a federal charter could be re-introduced in September or October. A witness appearing on behalf of this organization assured hon. Senators that the requirements of their constitution relative to the procedure they must follow had been followed. I suggest it was abided by in the most technical way possible and that there was not an adequate opportunity for the full membership to have any say in this connection.