

House of Commons Act

our constitution. Private members of this House either individually or collectively would, according to that proposal, decide on how to spend money without apparently consulting the treasury and the Minister of Finance who must raise taxes to pay for the proposal.

Another side issue that arises relates to the salaries of Members of Parliament, their expense accounts, their administrative support and the facilities they use. Here, may I say that I do not think the present system whereby salaries of Members of Parliament are specifically set out in the Senate and House of Commons Act is good. I think some method ought to be incorporated in the statute whereby salaries like these can be reviewed automatically, perhaps every time there is a new Parliament, and adjusted as other salaries are. Personally, I think the system under which I and other Members of Parliament must decide on the salaries of Members of Parliament is—

Mr. Otto: Obnoxious.

Mr. Allmand: —obnoxious.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): But you still will have to do it, one way or another.

Mr. Allmand: The hon. member for Edmonton West may have other ideas. Personally, I feel the statute should be changed, or some alternative procedure ought to be included in the statute to deal with this. The hon. member for Skeena proposes that a parliamentary committee ought to deal with these things. Well, right now we have the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization which deals with the estimates of the House and will deal in a week or so with salaries of members of the House and all those who work in this place.

I think I also ought to say this, while on the subject of salaries and expense accounts of Members of Parliament. I am personally opposed to a straight figure being allocated for an expense allowance, no matter whether it is \$6,000, \$4,000 or \$8,000. I think that is the wrong way of doing things. We should be required to produce vouchers for expenses related to our work, and if we have actually spent the money on purposes necessary to our position we should be reimbursed up to a certain amount. But I do not think it is right that we should receive a fixed amount by way of expenses whether we have spent it or not, whether we need it or not.

[Mr. Allmand.]

● (5:30 p.m.)

I am not suggesting that the initiative taken by the hon. member for Skeena is anything but good, although I do not approve of the method he has used. I think we should exercise greater control in this House over our own affairs. Perhaps the Committee on Procedure and Organization which is to deal with the estimates of the House of Commons this year will find itself in a position to submit proposals in connection with some of these matters. Possibly the committee could report to the House on a much more comprehensive way of dealing with all these considerations—the conditions of employees of the House, expenses and salaries, administrative support for Members of Parliament, office staffs and all that kind of thing.

I do not see how we can get around section 54 of the British North America Act. Indeed, I am not sure it would be good to dispense with this particular section as long as we have a parliamentary system. But I do feel Parliament should be given a much greater say. It should be made clear, though, that the present system was established by the House of Commons and by Parliament.

The hon. member for Skeena said we were not masters of our own house because the work was being done by the Commissioners of Internal Economy. Nevertheless the time that these functions should be performed by Commissioners of Internal Economy; it was this decision which gave them certain authority under the statute. Since Parliament gave them this authority, Parliament can also withdraw it or change it. The fact that the hon. member has put forward a bill on the subject, a bill which has a chance of being adopted, is proof that we are our own masters. Nevertheless, we are subject to the constitution and to the constitutional conventions of the parliamentary system.

In conclusion, may I say that while I do not approve of the bill as presented, I do believe hon. members of the House should have more influence over the spending of money in connection with the work of the House. Now that we have a new set-up under which all estimates are referred to committees, it is possible that the Committee on Procedure and Organization which is to consider the estimates of the House of Commons will find it possible to participate in handling the economy of this House. It may be that the committee will find a way to assume a more important role vis-à-vis the Commissioners of Internal Economy and come forward with