

House of Commons Act

share, to give the administration of the House of Commons in its totality back to the Members of all Parties.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A question by the Hon. Member for Edmonton West.

Mr. Smith: Mr. Speaker, may I rise on a point of order?

Mr. Lambert: Mr. Speaker, bearing in mind that this Bill was tabled in April of 1980, might I ask the Hon. Member whether he thinks that my thinking today, which is comparable to his thinking today, would necessarily be encompassed in this Bill?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Just to set the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Smith) straight, it is my understanding that if an Hon. Member wishes to accept a question and still has time remaining, it is permissible. This is the situation we find ourselves in now.

Mr. Collette: Mr. Speaker, I would be pleased to answer the Hon. Member's question, but I really did not follow the logic of it. Perhaps the Hon. Member could rephrase his question so that I, with my limited mind, could understand it.

Mr. Lambert: Mr. Speaker, I would not want to try in any way to cast any aspersion regarding the Hon. Member. I was wondering whether he was aware of the fact that this Bill had been tabled in April of 1980, and as such, whether it would necessarily reflect his thinking at the time and my thinking at the time. If I had the right to speak at this time, I would certainly set the Hon. Member straight.

Mr. Collette: Mr. Speaker, I am not really sure what the Hon. Member is getting at. When I was Parliamentary Secretary to the House Leader, I was aware of this Bill and I saw its limitations then when it was first introduced and first put on the Order Paper. My original reservations about the intent of his Bill have been substantiated by the knowledge that I have gained from the representations made before our committee.

Mr. Laverne Lewycky (Dauphin-Swan River): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak to Bill C-273 at this time. Bill C-273 is a Bill which is designed to amend the House of Commons Act and which deals specifically with changes that could be made to the Commissioners of the House who deal with many of the administrative concerns of the House of Commons. In view of the favourable attitude that the Hon. Member for York East (Mr. Collette) seemed to take on some aspects of the subject matter, I had hoped that perhaps at the very least we could have had the Bill withdrawn and the subject matter referred to committee, enabling us to deal in a more substantial way with some of the suggestions made by the Hon. Member for York East. I believe that some of his comments are similar to the observations I have made over the last three years or so that I have participated in the Committee on Management and Members' Services and have been concerned about the workings of the Commission on Internal Economy and of those who have been making decisions with

regard to many of the administrative matters that affect us in the House.

I would point out that Section 16 of Bill C-273 remains as it is currently in the Act in that the Governor in Council is empowered to appoint Members to serve on this Commission, and I think some of the comments that the Member for York East made coincide with some of my observations. These observations are that I think we would be much more impressed with the situation if Members were either elected or in some way proportionately nominated by the various Parties to serve, as it were, as the judges on matters that came before the Internal Economy Commissioners. As was mentioned by the previous speaker, it would certainly seem to me that if Members who were not loaded down with the executive responsibilities of Government served on the Commission, then the various issues and concerns that Members have raised would be dealt with perhaps much more expeditiously and even more equitably.

In the time that I have, I would like to underline the kinds of concerns that we in the New Democratic Party have, and I know from my experience on the Management and Members' Services Committee that other Members from both the Liberal and Conservative Parties have raised the same concerns. As was mentioned, substantial administrative changes have been made by the introduction of an Administrator. As has been rightly pointed out, these changes have not been reflected in Standing Orders, and this is certainly a matter that should be addressed and perhaps examined more carefully.

There exists a Management and Members' Services Committee which meets fairly regularly, but its powers have been rather limited in the sense that it serves basically as an advisory group. As a result, there have been quite a few communication and consultation gaps in the recommendations made by the Management and Members' Services Committee. On many occasions, recommendations have been made to the Speaker and to members of the internal economy group, and at the same time, answers have been given to questions that have not been asked or recommendations that have not been made. Many problems have been experienced with the feedback being either slow or incomplete. This would indicate to me that there should be a re-examination of the function of the advisory Committee on Management and Members' Services and, as was suggested, perhaps there could be an amalgamation of the functions of the commissioners on Internal Economy or else the Commission could be restructured so that the Members who make decisions are representative of the various groups and political Parties.

In terms of my experience in the Committee on Management and Members' Services, I find that that committee is one of the most non-partisan groups in the House of Commons. On almost every problem that we have tackled, the attitude of all Members has been constructive. The Members have co-operated and worked together. It is a group that has not been wracked with division or strife nor have its members tried to score political points. Basically we have been trying to deal