

and interesting that many of my colleagues have participated and have left me very little time in which to make my comments. Because time may cut me off, and so there is no equivocation about my position on this bill, let me say that I propose to vote against it.

I compliment the hon. member for his perseverance in bringing this bill before the House because I think it is the kind of legislation with which we should be dealing. However, I would have been happier had it come forward in the form of a motion setting forth the ideas that the hon. member wishes to promote. In that way, rather than referring the bill to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs, in effect we would be discussing a notice of motion and making recommendations to the government for its consideration.

Like the hon. member, I feel that there is a role for the ombudsman to play federally. I agree with some of the points made by the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin), who said there may be a gap in the federal area where the rights of individual citizens are not adequately protected. Surely somewhere in that vague area there is a role for an ombudsman to play.

It may be that too much time has been spent in this bill in trying to determine who should fulfill the role of ombudsman. This is where I take exception to the hon. member's suggestion that this function should be performed by the Auditor General. I note that the hon. member was able to bootleg some uncharitable comments about the government's position in dealing with the Auditor General. May I say for the record that I am in favour of a fully independent Auditor General operating in his present unimpeded fashion.

I think the legislation before us could have accomplished the same aim with very minor changes. I was unhappy that the bill respecting the Auditor General was removed, but there seemed to be good reason for doing so. I hope that the bill is only dormant and is not deceased. Because I am for a fully independent Auditor General, I wonder, as did the Parliamentary Secretary, if we would not be dragging him into the field of politics and into an area where he should not be and where he will lose his independence.

I am concerned, as was the Parliamentary Secretary, that we may be diffusing the obligations we have to our constituents as Members of Parliament. I am satisfied that Members of Parliament who represent every portion of this great country are in a much better position to act in the capacity of ombudsmen and to fill the kind of gap which the hon. member for Greenwood and myself perceive. But with our present facilities it is impossible to do this. We do not have sufficient staff, we do not have adequate office space and we do not have sufficient contact with our ridings. Unhappily, sessions now last from nine to ten months, depending on the legislation that must be passed, and for that reason we cannot get back to our constituents as often as many of us would wish.

While the House is in session we often have to visit our constituencies on weekends only and that is the only time we can meet our constituents. I think that sessions should be divided into three or four sections so we would have three or four months in which to perform the kind

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of service that an ombudsman would perform. I do not like the idea of a Member of Parliament hearing a complaint from a constituent and having to determine whether it is the kind of question he can handle or whether it should be referred to an ombudsman. We would then have to determine what kind of matter the ombudsman could handle.

The pressure would then be on the ombudsman who would be overloaded and asking for more staff because he would constantly be asked by 265 Members of Parliament what he had done about their particular case. I see it as a weakness if a Member of Parliament has to determine whether a person has a grievance that should be brought to the attention of the ombudsman, as suggested in this bill. To quote Mr. Churchill, "Give us the tools and we will finish the job". I think we could do the job better than most, and certainly better than a paid civil servant operating with a fancy title such as suggested in this bill.

There is a place for an ombudsman but that place can be adequately filled by Members of Parliament. It is being done today by good, conscientious, hard working members of this House, but we could do a better job and I hope we will be given an opportunity to do it. This would be better than setting up another bureaucracy which would only increase red tape.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): The hour reserved for the consideration of private members' business having expired, I do now leave the chair until eight o'clock.

At six o'clock the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

EXPORT DEVELOPMENT ACT

AMENDMENTS RESPECTING AUTHORIZED CAPITAL BORROWING, LIABILITY UNDER CONTRACTS OF INSURANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. MacEachen (for the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce) that Bill C-184, to amend the Export Development Act, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs.

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I shall say just a few words, in line with the usual modest and moderate contributions that I make from my place in this House, with regard to this bill. In the first place, I do not think the bill is as simple as has been suggested. I think there are some pretty substantial proposals contained in it. I shall not deal with all the proposals, because I am not allowed to do so, but the change in the amount of money involved and the total