

*Government Orders*

there is any question in the minds of Canadians what should be done about the law. However, apparently the justice minister is so unsure that he is going to need some extra advice, for which we have to pay millions of dollars.

Just so the Canadian public who are watching this debate are clear on what we are talking about today, we are debating Bill C-106. This reinstates a body that was formerly called the law reform commission and is now being resurrected and reincarnated under the name of the Law Commission of Canada.

The Law Commission of Canada will have five members, a full time president and four appointed commissioners to assist the president. In addition, unless these five people find themselves bereft of ideas, they are going to be ably assisted by a further government appointed body called the Law Commission of Canada Advisory Council, with 24 additional patronage appointments.

Bill C-106 reinstates a failed body, this law commission of five people and an additional 24 people to advise them. Apparently the idea of this is to provide "independent" advice on needed improvements, "modernization", and reform of Canadian law. Again, we need to make it abundantly clear that the people of Canada are not leaving the government in the dark about the improvements and reforms that are needed in Canadian law. Why they have to work hard to shell out another \$3 million a year to have the obvious stated, if in fact it is stated, is beyond the comprehension of any hard working and overtaxed Canadian I can think of.

This additional spending of \$3 million a year is touted as a great improvement because the old disbanded law reform commission cost a whole \$4.8 million a year, so we are actually saving \$1.8 million with this new, streamlined version of the Canadian law commission. I do not think it takes a cynical Canadian to figure out that \$3 million in budget almost invariably creeps up. If \$3 million is the bottom line, Canadians have to wonder what the top line is going to be.

The old law reform commission grew into a very significant bureaucracy. It is the nature of government to suspect and be concerned that the same thing is going to happen again, because these five commissioners and 24 advisers to the commissioners are going to need some administrative assistance, which is going to be another consideration.

In the justice minister's introduction of this bill he said something that to me was extremely curious. He said "This will be an independent and accountable body working at arm's length from government". That is a direct quote. Canadians should know that these five commissioners are being appointed by the cabinet of this government on the recommendations of the

justice minister. Tell me and any other logical Canadian who might happen to be listening to this debate how a body directly appointed by the justice minister has even the feeblest chance of being independent. Give Canadians some credit for intelligence here.

The minister then said, in the same twinning of words, "independent and accountable". I know that logic is not taught much these days, but it begs the question of how a body can be both independent of government and accountable to government at the same time. It is just not possible. In fact the whole way this is set up, independent is about the last thing this body is.

• (1040)

The Minister of Justice has a history of encouraging politicized bodies to endorse his predetermined positions. We saw that in the debate on Bill C-68 and we have seen it in other debates. He will get up and say that a certain group really supports this legislation. Well yes, the group is funded by the government. One wonders what group would not know what side its bread was buttered on. Of course it will not bite the hand that feeds it. It will be a cheering section for the very body that gives it dollars to keep going.

If we are going to talk about independence, let us at least be honest. Let us at least be reasonable. Let us at least be logical. Let us have something that will carry an ordinary judgment. This is not, in any way, shape, or form, an independent body.

In a news release before Bill C-106 was introduced in the House, the headline read: "Minister of Justice Announces Creation of a New Law Commission". Since this thing has already been created, why are we wasting our time debating it? We all know it is a done deal. This debate is just a formality. The thing has been created. It has been announced publicly. The public knows. Canadians have been told. The objections we are going to be bringing forward in the debate will mean nothing. It is nice that the opposition has a chance to fire at this thing, but it is done.

I find that repugnant in a democratic system. I would like to think that the work and the research I do in examining bills and issues counts for something. It is very clear to all Canadians that it does not.

How independent is the commission? Clause 5 of the bill requires that the Law Commission of Canada consult with the minister before setting its agenda. That does not seem to me to be independent. I suppose that good Liberals will say that the commission does not have to listen to him. He is only the guy who appointed them and gave them this wonderful patronage position in the first place. He is only the guy who pays their salaries. He is only the guy who will request reports from them. This consultation in setting the agenda really means that the