

suggest he is probably very sincere in his intent, in what he is attempting to do.

With that I suspect the member appreciates this may very well be coming to a dead end sooner rather than later. The New Democrats at this point would request unanimous consent to have Bill C-372 referred to committee for further study.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Members have heard the terms of the motion. Is there agreement?

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, this bill is an interesting concept and I congratulate the hon. member for Abitibi for having brought it forward.

He obviously has thought about the question that he has raised. I know he has persisted in attempting to file with the House his statement of expenses. I recognize this bill as the product.

[*Translation*]

This bill is the result of the efforts that he has been making in this House for a long time. I congratulate him on that but I do not think that this bill is a good one and it should not pass second reading.

[*English*]

What the member has proposed could be dealt with by law by the Board of Internal Economy. I have every reason to expect that something along these lines is being considered by that board. As the hon. member may be aware, I am not a member of it so I do not attend its meetings and I have no more information as to what goes on there than he has. But I am aware that the board has looked at the possibility of publicizing additional information about members' expenses than has been the case hitherto.

As he knows, the Public Accounts of Canada contain details of the expenses that members incur in travel. I understand the Public Accounts of Canada are delayed this year. The government does not have them ready. One suspects it is trying to fix the books; there is so much red ink in them that it has to get them printed in the proper way in black ink so that it does not show up.

Private Members' Business

Mr. Edwards: That is an imputation.

Mr. Milliken: No, no, no. I did not say that it had cooked the books. I avoided that. I said it is trying to fix the books and it has to get them fixed up. They are late. They should have been tabled two days after the Auditor General's report. That is the standard practice. Guess when they are coming before the House. It will be on December 10, the day before we adjourn, so we cannot ask any questions. That is what is going on.

However, aside from that, the figures will be published for travel. Last spring the management committee had before it the Auditor General who had completed a study on the House of Commons and the way it operated. The Auditor General was critical of the way this House reported on financial matters, particularly individual members, because members get many things provided for them by the House that are not charged to members' operating budgets. The recommendation the Auditor General made—and frankly in principle it is a very good recommendation—was that members' operating budgets be increased and they be charged for expenses they incur for which the House is currently paying.

That includes things like long distance telephone calls, office equipment that is available on the Hill, the travel budget generally which could be added to the member's operating budget and the expenses charged out against it, the stationery supplies which are currently provided for free, as well as householder expenses which could be charged to an operating budget.

In that way members would take some considerable responsibility for the expenses they incur instead of the current arrangement where since these things are provided for free the member is not encouraged to use any thrift or particular judgment in deciding whether or not to spend the money. The money is not accountable. The House absorbs the cost. It is free to the member so it is simply a matter of using a privilege that is extended and using it fully or less than fully. The fact is that the privilege is there.

I would be quite happy as a member to have my budget increased and then have the ability to spend the money in different ways within the budget, deciding what I think is a priority. If I consider travel a priority then I can opt for more travel. If I consider householders a priority, I can opt for more householders. If I consider telephone communication a priority, I can opt for more telephone