

House of Commons

as we would on a day-to-day basis with assistance from an intern, but the branch could be continued as a complement to the internship program. That is something that can be decided another time.

I believe this resolution has great merit. I think Canada has reached a point where an internship program should be established on Parliament Hill. As I said at the beginning, it would be a tremendous assistance not only to the interns but also to the members of parliament. I hope hon. members will see fit to endorse the resolution or, if they do not feel like doing so right now, I suggest that the matter be referred to the special committee on organization and procedure the members of which, in their wisdom, could consider and recommend it to this honourable chamber.

Mr. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, this is a very interesting motion and I commend the hon. member for Wellington South (Mr. Hales) for introducing it. It has two principal aspects, both of which have much value. The first aspect is the internship program as a means of training Canadian students in politics, government and law. The second aspect relates to the use of these interns as assistants to members of parliament.

I shall deal first with the first aspect, that is, an internship program in the House of Commons. There is no doubt that university courses have a tendency to become too academic, with the result that the student does not always get a correct picture of the Canadian government and its parliament. For three years I served as a lecturer in political science, teaching Canadian government, and I often realized the difficulties met by students who never saw parliament in action. As a matter of fact, as a lecturer and a person fairly extensively read in Canadian government I found the picture I had obtained from books was not always the true picture of how our government and parliament act.

In many other countries it is much easier for students to visit the seat of government and study it at first hand. In England a large percentage of students live within a few hours of the parliament at Westminster. The same applies in Paris, Rome and most other European countries. In addition, many of these countries have education and training systems somewhat similar to that which is suggested in this motion. In France the Institut des Sciences Politiques and Economiques, established in Paris, gives the student

[Mr. Hales.]

who intends to work in government an excellent academic and practical training. While he may not work as an assistant to a deputy, he does keep in close touch with the practical processes of government.

Since Canada is a large, sparsely populated country it is especially important that some type of parliamentary internship be established. Many of our universities are such a long distance from Ottawa, and travelling to the national capital is so expensive, that such an internship program would help bring many students to Ottawa where they could get a first-hand viewpoint. Such a system would also do much to promote the national interest as opposed to the regional interest.

Students who might otherwise spend all their university years in the same province, subject only to provincial influences, would have the opportunity of spending a year in Ottawa learning to appreciate at first hand the national parliament. Such an internship program would not only do much to help students in their work and assist in the understanding of their respective sciences but it would also do much to upgrade the whole process of government in Canada. It would provide us with a group of men much better informed, more understanding and more knowledgeable of government and parliament.

The motion refers to political scientists, journalists and law professors but I would think it should include, as the hon. member mentioned, all students whose work requires an understanding of our government. These might be economists, law students, social scientists and social workers.

I find the inclusion of journalists most interesting. There is no doubt that the press gallery plays a most important role in our democratic process. They have the difficult task of reporting, interpreting and commenting on the affairs of parliament for the information of the Canadian people. Whereas today most members of parliament are obliged to concentrate on one or two areas of legislation, and cabinet ministers must necessarily concentrate, most of our journalists are expected to report intelligently on all types of bills, all types of statements and all types of political discussion.

In this age of specialization it is obvious that this may be too much to expect. One day the journalist is obliged to report on the technical intricacies of economic and fiscal policy, interest rates and taxation, the next day on the complexities of international law,