

Financial Administration Act

[Translation]

It being five o'clock the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper, namely public bills, private bills, notices of motions.

[English]

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS**FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION ACT**

AMENDMENT TO ESTABLISH OFFICE OF
PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSIONER
FOR ADMINISTRATION

Mr. R. N. Thompson (Red Deer) moved that Bill C-40, to amend the Financial Administration Act (Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration), be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs.

He said: Before speaking to the subject matter of Bill C-40, Mr. Speaker, I have a minor complaint I would like to bring to the attention of Your Honour. I did not realize that I did not have my copy of Bill C-40 in the House. Our copies have been removed due to the summer recess and the fact that we are only sitting for a few days. In the few minutes before five o'clock I desperately tried to get a copy of Bill C-40. I am informed that distribution have none and there are none in the House. While at this late stage of this session such a thing could well be an oversight on the part of distribution, it seems that copies of the bill ought to be available.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the Chair might assist the hon. member by letting him have the Chair's copy of the bill.

Mr. Thompson: I really was not concerned about Your Honour having a copy of the bill. I was concerned about the people on the other side who need to read this bill. I was hoping they might at least study it while I am speaking. I do not think many of them have taken time to read it. It was really of my concern for them that I was speaking, but I do appreciate Your Honour's generosity.

For at least eight years, Mr. Speaker, it has been my privilege to bring before this House the need for an ombudsman, a parliamentary commissioner, a man who can be concerned with the rights of the private citizen, particularly as they relate to the growing power and ever-increasing dominance of the public ser-

vice in the normal life and living of the individual Canadian.

Bill C-40 is a little at variance with previous bills I have presented because with this bill the auditor general would have added to his responsibilities, his terms of reference, that of parliamentary commissioner for administration. This does not require the expenditure of any new moneys. It does not require the setting up of a new office. It would merely expand the work which the auditor general already does.

In the month of December, 1964, the auditor general appeared before the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections at which time the committee was concerning itself with the study of a bill which I had the privilege to sponsor. This Bill would have established formally an office of parliamentary commissioner. It is interesting to note that committee gave unanimous support to that bill, passed it, and referred it back to the House of Commons. A few months later in the Speech from the Throne, as the policy of the government of the day, we were assured that an ombudsman would be appointed, during the current year. However, nothing came of it. Neither did a similar promise in the Speech from the Throne which followed the next year.

In those hearings of the committee, the auditor general explained that he spent a great deal of his time acting as ombudsman on matters relating to taxes and financial administration of the country as they reflected down to the individual citizen. At the time he said that he received at least two or three letters a week with regard to this. He usually conferred with the deputy minister of the department involved, basically the Minister of Finance or the Minister of National Revenue. He said it was gratifying to know that many of these complaints had come to him, not because he asked for them, but because of the nature of his office, and that he was able to provide a satisfactory answer.

• (5:10 p.m.)

It was through these hearings and as a result of the government's failure to act on its promises that the idea of administrative ombudsman and this bill was born. Basically, the Auditor General would act as parliamentary commissioner. In that capacity it would "be his duty to investigate the administration, by a power or authority or officer of such power or authority, of any law of Canada whereby any person is aggrieved or, in the opinion of the commissioner, may be