

Government Administration

our own House of Commons to provide rules which will make information readily available. I submit that prodding by hon. members, such as the one who proposed this bill, would bring about an improvement in the practice in this house, and that before long we would have rules that are much more in keeping with twentieth century ideals and procedures.

These ideals and practices can be introduced in many different ways; but I submit the one suggested by the hon. member for Surrey is a very cumbersome and expensive way of attempting to solve the problem. It is expensive because it requires more judges in this huge country, stretching 3,000 miles from coast to coast and with 20 million people. Will they write in and make their requests? How will such a program be administered? I do not see anything in the bill which indicates a clear cut system for carrying out the practical suggestions contained in clauses 1, 2 and 3.

We have all had frustrations in attempting to get information at some stage, and I would be less than frank if I said there is no problem in this regard. I recognize the problem; but I believe most sincerely that steps have already been taken toward reaching our goal in this respect. This has been done by sending out the task force which the Prime Minister sent out recently. If that task force can come back with concrete, solid ideas whereby everyone will know whom to contact and in what department, they will make great strides toward reform in this area.

Therefore, sir, I conclude by commending the hon. member for—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Gibson: I mean that seriously, sir. I conclude by commending the hon. member for a forward looking idea, but I submit that the method proposed is not the best.

Mr. Gilbert: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member a question. In view of the remarks in his maiden speech last week, that private members public bills were ridiculous, a waste of time and should be done away with, I am wondering why he is participating in this debate today—because this is the second time within a week.

Mr. Gibson: Mr. Speaker, this is the only forum I have. As a young member, I hesitate to try to speak on important legislation such as the agrarian acts, the farm acts. I know very little about these subjects, and I do not mind admitting it. I have been advised by

other hon. members, with more experience than I have that the private members hour is the best place to express views, and to attempt to gain experience in thinking out and planning so as to conform with the rules of debate. That is the main reason I have taken part in the debate, although I am extremely interested in this topic.

The suggestion I made last week was not to abolish private members bills, but rather that there be a more effective way of using this hour for the discussion of controversial topics, having six speeches of ten minutes each. I think we would all find it more interesting and exciting; the press would enjoy it, and the public would find it more provocative.

Some hon. Members: Question.

• (6:50 p.m.)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Herb Breau (Gloucester): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate because the bill proposes something new, a new way from the government to approach the public.

First of all, I must say that I do not fully agree with those who believe that the politisation of Canadians will improve relations between the government and the public, or encourage the public to approach the government and to take an interest in some department or other.

It goes without saying that people would of course derive some benefit from such an act because, first of all, the information would be free. What I mean is that anyone who wanted information, for the specific purpose of criticizing certain departments or, as I said, of pursuing the politisation of the people would be free to do so, and quite easily at that. For instance, anyone who wanted to tear down certain government programs for personal reasons could obtain information on the topics discussed during their preparation and then use this information to fight against the program, and in some cases, to compete against it.

Now, as I was saying, I do not fully agree that it will necessarily help the people, but I am concerned about the fact that it might give rise to dissension amongst Canadians and give rise to doubts. There are, no doubt, people who would wonder, when a department is in process of studying the pros and cons of some program or policy or other, whether the public should read about it.