

House of Commons Act

the situation. This is likely one of the last speeches which I may make in the House. I want to point out that after 27 years as a Member I think I can appreciate the limitations and frustrations that are the lot of a private Member. One of them is this institutional treatment of Members as though they could not look after their own affairs. We are treated as though we were in a big school with a board of masters looking after us which is so high and mighty that they do not understand the problems. For instance, there is not one Cabinet Minister on the commission who understands the problems of a wife who travels far in western Canada. She is charged 1.5 points if she is travelling with her husband but is only charged one point if she travels economy. All Members are entitled to travel first class and are not charged 1.5 points. The decision to mix the points was made by the Internal Economy Commission.

● (1720)

The put-down experienced by wives of Members from western provinces and Newfoundland in order to use that facility is unbelievable. It only takes four trips to exhaust a wife's complement of points. If a Member must travel six times, he can do it in economy, but the wife is aware that by travelling economy she has been put down by this differential rate. This is what I am talking about.

We all know that of the many changes that have been effected with regard to parliamentary staffs this is an improvement, but it should come from where Members can go and see their own people.

I thank you for allowing me to transgress on my time, Mr. Speaker. I earnestly urge all Members to allow this motion to go to committee or to be accepted so that it will be a signal to the Government that Members of Parliament want a change in the nature and composition of the board of the Internal Economy Commission so that they may have a say in the operation of the matters that concern them so much.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude-André Lachance (Rosemont): Mr. Speaker, I shall be brief. I know you are smiling. Always beware of Members of Parliament who start their speeches this way. However, you may take me at my word. I am somewhat hesitant about speaking again to this subject. The Hon. Member who moved the motion will remember that I took part in a similar debate before. In any case, I am doing this for the simple reason that it may be my last chance to speak to my peers, since I thought, after ten years in politics, this might be the right time to say farewell to this House. At the end of this term, I shall be leaving public life, and my Rosemont constituents will have to choose a new Member of Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, with your leave, and despite the rules of relevance, I would like to thank all my colleagues with whom I have worked during the last ten years, and also the officials of the House of Commons and, of course, my constituents in the riding of Rosemont, who during three terms have allowed me

to represent their interests at the seat of Government, and to do so to the best of my ability, to work for the well-being of the people who elected me, and to try to make our governments as responsible as possible so that Canada, this exemplary parliamentary democracy, will take the road of progress at the end of the twentieth century and look to a future which, I hope, will be as progressive and as positive as it can be, especially for our youth who are seeking their identity and are looking at the future with some anxiety.

Mr. Speaker, the last ten years were ten years of experience on which I look back with pride, not because of my work as such, because one must be humble in politics, but because serving one's country is probably the highest goal to which we can aspire in our working life.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned accountability, which is the essence of the motion of the Member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert). The Hon. Member wants to include in the Board of Internal Economy, now consisting of members of the Privy Council, a number of backbenchers who would provide better representation, within a body that manages our destiny as an institution, for the divergent but also complementary interests of the Parties, the Government and backbenchers, the aim being improved accountability, whether physical or financial, on the part of the administration of this House, to the elected representatives and the Canadian people.

I need no convincing by the Hon. Member to realize that this is the way of the future. In fact, the Special Committee on Standing Orders and Procedure, or rather the Special Committee on Regulatory Reform, whose third report and the amendments proposed therein continue to structure the business of the House during this trial period—it is to be hoped they will become permanent for the next Parliament—this committee then proposed in its ninth report a formula very similar to the one suggested by the Hon. Member for Edmonton West. In this report, committee members suggested that the enabling legislation that provides for the organization of the Board of Internal Economy be amended to allow four backbenchers to sit on the Board, two representing Government backbenchers and two representing Opposition backbenchers, with at least one representing the Official Opposition. More importantly, Mr. Speaker, Special Committee members were in favour of having these representatives elected by their respective caucuses, this to avoid a situation where once more, the Government would be controlling these appointments. The exact formula could be worked out later and is not all that important. It is the principle that counts, which is to make the Board of Internal Economy truly representative of the interests of all Members of this House, which is not the case right now. I am not criticizing the way the Board operates. I think Hon. Members who sit on the Board at the present time and are members of the Privy Council certainly have our interests at heart and are doing their best to