

Government Organization

provision in Bill C-35 because they are not serious about it and wanted to put it in a bill which they do not intend to proceed with, whereas they did intend to proceed with Bill C-12?

The only reason Bill C-12 is not before the House now is because I took it upon myself to act as the opposition House leader and ask the government House leader a couple of questions. I suppose the House leader was surprised to hear me say that before we proceeded with this very contentious bill directed toward all the people of Canada, we would want to hear witnesses, particularly PIPS, the Professional Institute of the Public Service, the Tomenson-Alexander management firm, representatives of the mounted police and all those directly affected by what the government was proposing. This was within the trade union movement. Over and above that, we also wanted to hear from the private sector in order to determine whether or not the government was moving in the right direction with regard to Bill C-12.

Another question we have with regard to this particular provision is: What effect will this provision have on the actuarial soundness of the public service superannuation account? Was this potential change taken into consideration when the chief actuary was making his actuarial calculations with regard to the public service superannuation account and the supplementary retirement benefits account for purposes of the changes proposed in Bill C-12, which is the indexation bill? In fact, was the Treasury Board even consulted on this matter?

I note that the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Buchanan) is not here at this particular time, and I will make no derogatory remarks in that regard. But surely this is a matter in which he should have some input. Why are new employees being incorporated at a time when the funding of public service pensions has been so seriously questioned?

No doubt the government House leader through his staff will have taken notice of all the questions I have asked so that he may have all the answers in committee and will say that the hon. member was wrong, that he does not understand the bill, but that he does have some legitimate questions and here are the answers which he is attempting to seek.

Another question I have is: Why is it thought to be appropriate to incorporate Canadian Patents and Development Limited employees into the Public Service Superannuation Act and not the employees of certain other Crown corporations, such as CNR or Air Canada? What is the justification for this?

I would like to deal now with the representation commissioner aspect of this bill, and we have heard the explanation by the minister in this regard. I believe there was a big debate in 1963 by a member I did not know named Mr. Pickersgill. I believe he carried that thing through by way of resolution. The government House leader wants to take credit for it, but the portion I read did not refer to him. The most important contribution to that debate was by Mr. Pickersgill and the right hon. gentleman from Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker).

[Mr. Alexander.]

As was stated, the bill abolishes the representation commissioner and brings his duties, such as defining electoral boundaries, under the chief electoral officer. In 1963 the job was split into two positions, with the chief electoral officer at the time becoming the representation commissioner and a new chief electoral officer being appointed. Rumour has it that this was done to ease the chief electoral officer out of his job. However, since the representation commissioner has, as was pointed out by the government House leader, little if anything to do between each census, it does not make sense to have two positions. Therefore, in order to save money the jobs are being combined again under the chief electoral officer.

Again, once this sort of thing is put into focus, there will be members who will have questions with respect to the whole issue of representation and the duties, obligations and rights which come under the chief electoral officer. Whatever the true motives might have been for establishing an independent representation commissioner in 1963, it was a proposal that we supported, and in fact we had been arguing for an independent commissioner for some time. That is why I can recall reading the very significant questions and statements made by the right hon. gentleman for Prince Albert and the replies. I regret that I was not around during Mr. Pickersgill's representations and his approach to answering these questions. I am sorry that I did not see anything there by the minister. Maybe he was a backbencher in those days and was not recognized except for some meaningless intervention.

● (1600)

Mr. MacEachen: I did the negotiation with your leader of the day on that subject.

Mr. Alexander: I was going to ask why the government no longer believes it necessary to have a full time independent representation commissioner. Can the job be handled adequately on a part-time basis? These are some of the question we will have to ask.

Another thing we are concerned about is research. I do not want to get involved in this particularly because other members of this party are eager to jump in and condemn the government for its tunnel vision approach to research and science. This has resulted in many talented young people and people with expertise fleeing the country. This is one of the least understandable and at the same time one of the most important of the government's measures and I condemn them for it. We all know what will happen as a result of this tunnel vision.

The bill allows the Medical Research Council, the National Research Council, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council and the Social Science and Humanities Research Council to appoint and classify staff without ministerial approval. That is a very significant step and a very significant statement and the government House leader says it is what he wants. I must ask, however, what mechanisms are being put in place to ensure that this appointment and classification authority will not be abused. We have already seen how classification has been handled in the public service when it