

*Financial Administration Act*

appointee's position down to such an extent that he would virtually prove ineffective. He must not be restrained in any artificial way.

The discussion on this bill gives me an opportunity to make one other point, as a member of parliament in my first term here in Ottawa, that I think is important at this time. A week or so ago there was a lead editorial in one of the major newspapers in this country, the *Toronto Star*, to the effect that there is no incentive whatsoever to be a member of parliament; that indeed, unless you are a cabinet minister you might as well forget it. You might as well not even go to Ottawa. This was the thrust of the article. It is the kind of argument that influences a good number of people who might otherwise be prepared to stand for election in their various ridings for whatever party they might be interested in. The editorial commented on the inability of members of parliament to have any input, the inability of the committee system to be meaningful, and made various other general comments demeaning to the role of an MP. These comments could be extremely discouraging, not to myself, Mr. Speaker, and I am sure not to members who are here and participating, but to people from the private sector who might want to join this forum and become involved in the national democratic process.

I want to take a few minutes in connection with this bill to indicate one small example of how that editorial is so very wrong—extremely wrong. I cite my own experience, Mr. Speaker, and I am sure I speak for other members of the public accounts committee in connection with this. Two years ago, Mr. Speaker, the whole matter of the chief financial officer or comptroller general was discussed at great length in the public accounts committee. I, among others from that committee, made the point on March 18, 1976, that in my view it would be most gratifying just to know that there was a chief financial officer among the 300,000 odd people employed by the federal government.

We discussed the matter with the Auditor General. We even tried to pin him down in committee as to whether or not he was recommending that appointment. At one time he was suggesting it might be a good thing but he did not have a firm recommendation. Later, Mr. Speaker, when he published his report for 1976, he did indeed make a very clear point. He referred, I might say, in his report to a question I had raised in the House of Commons and in committee regarding the establishment of just this type of position. By this time he had determined his own point of view firmly as supporting the concept of a comptroller general.

I only raise this, Mr. Speaker, because it seems to me a clear example of how members of parliament can indeed make a most useful contribution to the governing process here in Ottawa. This comment should be noted—but in all likelihood it probably will not—by this editorial writer of this leading Canadian newspaper. He should realize that he is quite wrong in his concept of what does and what can go on in the parliamentary process.

I would like to come back to the comment of the hon. member for Brant about committees. Mr. Speaker, committees

[Mr. Martin.]

in our system can be most useful. Not only has the public accounts committee had a great deal to do with support for this particular appointment, and support for Bill C-10 that we now have before us, but it has been useful in many other ways. What is needed is the input of individual members on committees. Too often, Mr. Speaker, we go to committees and for one reason or another the party representation is very low. Often we will be discussing an important piece of legislation, and for one reason or another members may wish to raise matters that are peripheral but which particularly interest them in the over-all subject, whether it be energy or some other area. Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that before we criticize, before we as members of parliament—I do not care on what side of this House—try and take the existing committee system apart, before we try and dismantle it or try and change it for something else, we should do our utmost to make the existing system work. And work it can.

It is possible to get general references made to committees. It does happen. We have noted this in a number of committees in the past four years. The people participating in committees can be fully satisfied with their participation. Certainly we had some problems in the public accounts committee when trying to get a man like Mr. Eisenberg from Israel to come before us. But I am not sure that any number of subpoenaes would have done any good. Never in my experience, Mr. Speaker, have we had to resort to that sort of thing to get a witness before a committee.

It seems to me that before we give committees a lot of new powers, we should make sure they are using the powers and the abilities they have to the fullest extent. Staff is available to us from the research department of the Library of Parliament. We have all kinds of help available to us, Mr. Speaker. I have not been on one committee of this House where members have wanted some help, whether it is of a financial nature, the need for outside counsel or whatever, and have been turned down.

Now, Mr. Speaker, until we have used the existing committee system to its fullest, I do not believe we have any point to make to you, Mr. Speaker, to the government or to anybody else as to its ineffectiveness. We have the ability to make those committees effective. It is up to us, to each one of us in this House to do so.

I would like to conclude my comments tonight by again coming back to this particular bill and expressing, I am sure on behalf of most members of the House, the great confidence that we have and will place in Mr. Rogers when he assumes his most difficult and delicate task. I exhort members on the other side of the House not to rush to define the job description in the form of legislation. It would be a big mistake. We do not do that for other deputy minister positions in the government service but, rather, give them a great deal of leeway. We should also give this appointee an opportunity to "get his feet wet" in the job and interact with his senior public service colleagues—to have an opportunity to establish his own credibility, which will be very important. His background certainly indicates his ability to do just that. He must be given adequate time, Mr. Speaker, to become installed in the job and to obtain