

studies of the recommendations. For a time there was a great flurry of anticipation that things were about to happen!

After all, in October of 1976 the Deputy Solicitor General had been appointed chairman of an interdepartmental committee of implementation. Thus were drawn in the assistant deputy minister for police and security, officials of the Privy Council Office and the Treasury Board Secretariat. Way to go! It went nowhere.

The committee reported its findings in July and August of 1977. A bill to amend the RCMP Act was at last introduced into Parliament in April 1978. It died on the Order Paper and was reintroduced in November 1978 and again in June 1981. It did not go beyond first reading. Back it bounced in 1984 and it died with dissolution. Sail on, oh ship of state!

It is not couth for a very junior parliamentarian to deal cynically with the majesty of process, but there are days when I am reduced to believing that the only thing we have in common with the gods is our infinite capacity to grind slowly. We must not be discouraged, although we can forgive our constabulary for losing faith in much-touted good intentions and we must understand the despairing of our citizens that government will ever give them the opportunity to vent their honest grievances.

● (1450)

As honourable senators are all aware, the government pushed forward undeterred with its consideration of the Marin report and the substantial studies of its merits and made some very useful amendments to previous legislative proposals and, on June 27, 1985, introduced Bill C-65 for first reading. That bill is now before this house, imperfect as all bills are, but a substantial contribution to Canadian justice in a context where there is not always understanding of the responsibilities shared by those who must enforce and those who must accept and understand the fairness of enforcement. The report, for the most part, represents vintage Marin, and for that we should all be grateful, as the bill proceeds through this chamber.

The commissioner and the minister are to be authorized to establish boards of inquiry to report on any matter linked with the organization, training, conduct, performance of duties, discipline, efficiency, administration or government of the force or affecting any other person appointed or employed under the authority of the act.

The bill provides for protections for those who participate in such proceedings—rights to counsel or other representation; the rights of those whose conduct or affairs are being investigated by the board to present evidence, cross examine witnesses and make representations to the board.

Establishment of the RCMP External Review Committee is intended to provide a mechanism of review by a committee composed of Governor in Council appointees. Here is another opportunity for ventilation of formal disciplinary sanctions, demotion or discharge and certain types of grievances. Under Bill C-65, any member of the force may grieve any administrative action, provided no other process for redress exists.

[Senator Doyle.]

Under the bill there will be a set of statutorily expressed standards of conduct which will form the basis for a code of conduct to be enacted through the regulations. Of course, a process will continue for the discharge or demotion of members of the force who fail to perform their duties, but protections and rights to re-consideration would be vastly improved.

The case for the public is: Anyone, whether affected or not by the subject matter of a complaint, will be able to lay a complaint concerning a member's conduct before the commission, any member of the RCMP or the provincial authority responsible for receiving complaints. Every citizen has a right to make his or her case in respect of such complaints through the public complaints process.

I must thank honourable senators for their patience in hearing me through this examination of Bill C-65. Those of you who have endured the bill's tedious proceedings through incarnation and reincarnation are well aware that I have neglected to touch upon many of the wise reforms that have been included in this accommodation of public and private concerns in our relationship with the great and good force that serves us all. But permit me a moment to give credit to the contribution the force itself has given to bringing this bill before us. I speak to the work of the RCMP division staff relations representatives, which was warmly welcomed by our Solicitor General. While not all of the recommendations made by the division staff relations representatives were accepted in the bill as it now stands—I was reminded the other day by my seat-mate that no act is forever—important changes were made on such matters as representation at all hearings of the External Review Committee. Again, I point out the Solicitor General's acceptance of the provision that off-duty activities not be subject to examination by the public complaints commissions, as they have been in the past, on the grounds that members are entitled to the same privacy rights as apply to other citizens.

Perhaps what is best about this bill, after all the versions of its gestation period, is that it represents the best views of those who govern and those who serve. I am pleased to recommend to my colleagues here its swift passage.

On motion of Senator Frith, debate adjourned.

[Translation]

EXCISE TAX ACT EXCISE ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Jean-Maurice Simard moved the second reading of Bill C-80, to amend the Excise Tax Act and the Excise Act.

He said: Honourable senators, Bill C-80, an Act to amend the Excise Tax Act and the Excise Act and to amend other Acts in consequence thereof, is an important piece of legislation arising from the May budget brought down by the Minister of Finance. The main purpose of this bill is to raise substantial new revenues in order to reduce the deficit.

When we examined the bill in the Committee on National Finance, a number of concerns were raised regarding the