

structure not, as yet, defined by law and whose powers have not yet been described.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to adding two backbenchers to the Commission of Internal Economy, the purpose of Bill C-687 is also to describe and define the Board of Commissioners of Internal Economy and its specific responsibilities, especially the major responsibility for approving the estimates of the Speaker, the Clerk and the Sergeant-at-Arms and submitting them to the Minister of Finance, who subsequently submits them separately to the House of Commons.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill is as well-intentioned as all the others, but it also demonstrates a concern for ensuring that the House of Commons again becomes what it was before, an instrument that provides services to Members, and that is administered to their satisfaction, with the consent and under the control of the Members.

[English]

Hon. Ron Huntington (Capilano): Mr. Speaker, I would like to compliment the Hon. Member for Beauharnois-Salaberry (Mr. Laniel). I am very interested in the Bill and the arguments as presented.

As some Hon. Members already know, Mr. Speaker, I have been involved in the Public Accounts Committee and in the whole question of a new form of the Estimates. I have also been involved in dealing with the fact that spending within the federal system is out of control. I have been working with the former Auditor General and the Public Accounts Committee on this matter, and we have been trying to address it with a new way of disclosing information.

As I look at this Bill, I remember the many hours of debate and struggle within the committees and the steering committees that were involved in setting up new disclosure of information provisions to allow for a better accountability factor for Government spending specifically dealing with the House of Commons. We on this side of the House would have been very pleased to hear a motion to the effect that the subject matter of Bill C-687 go to committee for study because, as the Hon. Member said, the Bill is one of several Bills dealing with the matter of better use of information for better accountability and a more effective use of taxation resources attributed to the House of Commons for its various functions.

● (1630)

Section 16(2) of this Bill, dealing with appointments, talks about the appointment of four Privy Councillors and two Members from the backbench of the Opposition. I should like to see members other than Government Privy Councillors sitting on this Board of Internal Economy, Mr. Speaker. As things are structured now, the Government has all the control, the spending powers and everything else. As a witness who appeared before the Special Committee on Standing Orders and Procedure said, if you are dealing with the knot in the rope in the tug of war of power between Government and the House of Commons, that knot has to move back toward the House of Commons.

House of Commons Act

I think the House of Commons has lost control over its expenditure watchdog functions. We are not functioning as elected directors of the taxpayers in the examination of expenditures. We are not properly using the information that is made public because it is not organized in a useful fashion. We are buried under an avalanche of paper. We get grocery baskets full of mail, reports, ministerial statements, Crown corporation reports, the subject matter of task forces, special committees and royal commissions. It all comes as an avalanche and we are buried under it. Much of it is trivia and is not organized in a form that would allow those of us with certain special interests or who represent ridings with an interest to use it.

I would not want to see four Members of the Privy Council who are incumbent Members of the Government sitting on any board that deals with the House. I should like to see Members of the Privy Council on that board, but if we are to move the knot of power back to the House so that we will have a higher standard of accountability over the Government, then we common Members should be deciding more things. We should be improving and strengthening our powers of inquiry, improving our efforts to hold the Government answerable for its actions.

I should like to see the subject matter of the Bill go to Committee so that some of our concerns can be discussed there. We should be able to improve the Bill to allow a new phase of operations to take place in the House of Commons.

The Hon. Member who presented the Bill spoke of discontent. He said that the kettle is boiling; that the House of Commons is no longer an agreeable place to work; that the best intentions of Members of Parliament are often frustrated by the oppressive measures they have to deal with; that we get more and more studies; that we are always referring things to committee but get no decisions and no tangible corrections. I share his frustration, as I am sure other Hon. Members do. I was once told by the former member for Peace River that one must not be impatient in this place. One must figure oneself lucky if three years of effort on one tiny segment of business moves it forward one notch and brings about an improvement for the people of Canada or an improvement in the processes of the House of Commons or of Government.

I have had trouble learning that, Mr. Speaker. I came here out of a taxpayer frustration. I know how hard it is to pay taxes and watch them be dissipated and spilled on carpets so that new carpets can be rolled in. I know the absolute disregard for the hours of labour and toil that go into the real taxes that come in to support the place. That is one of the reasons I am here going into my tenth year, although I have nothing like the experience or, probably, the depth of frustration of the Hon. Member who presented the Bill, who said he has been here 21 years. But before I allow myself to succumb to a shrug, Mr. Speaker, I had better get out and let someone else come in who is fresh and can carry the anger that I had when I arrived.

In spite of nine years of hard work on committees along with many colleagues, I see no improvement in the care and delivery of services or in the care for the tremendous amount of