

House of Commons Act

unlike the Hon. Member for York East (Mr. Collenette) who does not seem to know what the Committee does, that it has done a great deal to make working conditions for ordinary Members of Parliament a great deal better, both here on Parliament Hill and in serving their constituents wherever they happen to be located. I think as well that the Committee itself has, on a number of occasions, moved motions and sent them to the Commissioners on Internal Economy to have a member of my Committee serve on that Internal Economy Commission, because all too often the proposals of Members, who work very hard and are very diligent—and probably that Committee has the best attendance record of any Committee on Parliament Hill—are in a raw form without any explanation attached to them, and we have no one really to carry the message and to explain whatever nuances the motion might have. As a result, actions are taken which neither put the full proposal into effect nor reject it out of hand. That, almost without exception, is a mistake and it deters the work of individual Members of Parliament to a certain degree.

● (1710)

We must also recognize the fact that there are two different groups of Hon. Members who sit in this institution. Some are backbenchers and others are members of Cabinet. I do not think that, from a day to day point of view, we must worry about members of the Cabinet. They look after themselves pretty well. They have their own staffs, their own offices and their own people to do their thing. Individual Members of Parliament do not have anything similar.

There should be an infusion of information to the commissioners of the Internal Economy Commission as to just what the role of an individual MP might be on any particular issue that is before them and the problems which are associated, for instance, with rejecting a motion which has been discussed for many hours in the Management and Members' Services Committee before a resolution, which is usually a unanimous resolution in the Committee, goes forward to the Speaker.

We are an advisory committee to the Speaker and, as such, when it reaches the top echelon of decision-making, we do not have any part to play in it. I believe that even in an advisory way, a number of the members of the Management and Members' Services Committee should be in attendance at these particular meetings to point out what individual motions are all about and the reasons the Committee has put them forward.

Many things have been achieved, but many things have not. One of our concerns right at this moment in time involves the morale of either our office employees or of our personal employees on the Hill who are totally frustrated with individual Members of Parliament because we have been put in the position where we cannot even give our staff the 5 per cent increase which other civil servants have available to them. We cannot give them 1 per cent. We cannot give them anything. It is only because we have loyal staff that they are staying, if they are staying. I know of examples where they are not

staying and are even going to the administration operated here on Parliament Hill because the pay is better than in individual Members' offices. We must get that straightened out. We must also do something about ensuring that the Speaker, the Chairman and the members of the Internal Economy Commission pay more attention to what is really happening in the Management and Member's Services Committee.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérald Laniel (Beauharnois-Salaberry): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to take part in the debate on Bill C-273 introduced by my colleague opposite, the Hon. Member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert), to amend the House of Commons Act with a view to changing the number of Commissioners of Internal Economy and looking into the possibility of delegation of powers by the Speaker.

I quite agree with the over-all objective advocated by the Hon. Member, but then I must say that his Bill, which was introduced in the House a little over two years ago and came up for debate on November 6, 1981, does not solve the whole problem. The Hon. Member himself admitted earlier today in a private discussion that his opinion has been changing all along and that he was prepared to go even further than in the measure under study.

As it happens, Mr. Speaker, I too am drafting a Bill which I thought and still think is more comprehensive than the Hon. Member's. In light of the statements I have heard here this afternoon, I realize that I am still not sure whether he is going far enough.

Still, my opinion is closer to that of the Hon. Member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke (Mr. Hopkins) than to those of other Members, for I believe that some members of the Privy Council ought to be Commissioners of Internal Economy because they do have some financial responsibility toward the House. My bill should satisfy the Hon. Member for Cumberland-Colchester (Mr. Coates) since it provides for two additional Commissioners, two backbenchers—one from the Government, one from the Opposition—who have no special duties and no allowance. I intend to introduce my bill in the near future.

Earlier, when I was listening to my colleague from Cumberland-Colchester—I must commend him and the others who sit on the Committee on Management and Members' Services for the heavy workload they carry—I wanted to ask him before he left whether at one time or another someone from that Committee had been invited to appear before the Internal Economy Commission. That is where—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order, please. Pursuant to Standing Order 24(2), it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings. There being no other item on the order of business for today, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 2(1).

At 5.16 p.m. the House adjourned, without question put, pursuant to Standing Order.