

*Government Organization Act, 1983*

It does not really say whether or not that person can be re-appointed at the expiration of the 12 months' period. In certain instances I would deem it desirable that a re-appointment should be made, even for a short time. If, for instance, there was a piece of legislation that was going through the House and committee which the Parliamentary Secretary had been involved with for some time, it might be desirable that he or she should stay on as Parliamentary Secretary until that legislation had been completed. Sometimes when I look at the dearth of talent opposite I think it would be absolutely essential, if they want Parliamentary Secretaries of any worth at all, that some of them be eligible for re-appointment.

I would like to make a few comments on Parliamentary Secretaries in general. The Hon. Member for Don Valley West (Mr. Bosley) gave a very good discussion on the historical role of Parliamentary Secretaries. I would be inclined to agree with him that a certain amount of degeneration in the institution has taken place over the last few years. In the appointment of Parliamentary Secretaries by the present Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) the main objective has been to provide something for backbenchers to do. I know this is a problem. As a backbencher, especially on the Government side, the requirement always is that you should sit down and keep quiet and not do very much. We see that in operation this afternoon. It is necessary that you give people something to do, let them see their name in *Hansard* once in a while even if it is only on the list of Parliamentary Secretaries that is published each Wednesday. When you have a large majority, as we expect we will have in a few months from now, the problem of finding adequate duties for the backbenchers will become even worse. I know that we will have to face the same problem.

The workload on Parliamentary Secretaries would depend on several factors. In my observation, because I have never been fortunate enough to experience having been a Parliamentary Secretary, it depends primarily on the parliamentary workload of the Minister at any point in time. If there is a number of Bills, especially complex Bills, going through the House then the Parliamentary Secretary finds himself with something useful and worth-while to do. The personal relationship between the Minister and his or her Parliamentary Secretary is important. I have observed that some Ministers have been quite willing to delegate considerable authority and give their Parliamentary Secretary responsibilities, whereas others have not been willing to do so.

When I look over the past years of the present Government, I find that the experience with Parliamentary Secretaries has not been anything to write home about. There have been three Parliamentary Secretaries who have, in my opinion, done a good and worth-while job and have earned a pay cheque. I am pleased that one of the Hon. Members is with us. The Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Evans), in my opinion, worked very hard, as he had to do, when he was Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, the present Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacEachen). He certainly had a lot of explaining to do to Canadians at that time. I am sure it did not come easily to him, but I compliment him for his work.

Also, I want to give honourable mention to two gentlemen who are not here. One of them is now the Minister of State for Finance (Mr. MacLaren). I look back to the time when he was Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources at the time the Minister was pushing the national energy policy, Bill C-48, through the House. I disagreed with both the Minister and his Parliamentary Secretary on the contents of the national energy policy, and especially of Bill C-48, but I have to compliment the Parliamentary Secretary for the way in which he conducted his task and discharged his responsibilities. I wish he had not performed as well as he did. We might not have been saddled with the national energy policy as we know it today. The third Hon. Member opposite whom I want to single out for a special compliment is the Hon. Member for Mississauga North (Mr. Fisher) while he was Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of State for Finance. If Clause 25 is enacted as we have it, it would not be possible to make that type of appointment because Parliamentary Secretaries could be appointed only to Ministers of State who had an actual Ministry. I do not think it would be possible to appoint a Parliamentary Secretary to the present Secretary of State for Finance (Mr. MacLaren).

The Hon. Member for Mississauga North did an exemplary job when he was Parliamentary Secretary to the Hon. Member for York-Scarborough (Mr. Cosgrove). It is unfortunate that the Hon. Member for York-Scarborough, when he was Minister, knew very little about his portfolio. I do not think he had had any experience previously in the responsibilities for financial institutions. If we on this side wanted to know anything about the particular Bill in question, we found it very useful to approach his Parliamentary Secretary.

Generally speaking, the present system we have with Parliamentary Secretaries is a mechanism for allowing the Prime Minister of the day to keep his backbenchers in line. To a certain extent it is an exercise in patronage and trains them in the art of patronage. I have seen Parliamentary Secretaries flying all around the country handing out cheques, when the Minister was not available. Some of the Parliamentary Secretaries do a good and necessary job, but in general they are a superfluous species. I suggest that if Parliamentary Secretaries are appointed to the Ministers of State responsible for Economic Development, Social Development and Science and Technology, as contemplated in this Bill, they would certainly come under the heading of superfluous Parliamentary Secretaries.

I see you are indicating that my time has expired, Mr. Speaker. Therefore, I will not burden you with the rest of the revelations I was about to make in this regard.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin):** Is the House ready for the question?

**Mr. Lambert:** As a result of consultation in the usual way, an agreement has been reached. I have consulted the Hon. Member for New Westminster-Coquitlam (Miss Jewett). I would ask the House for unanimous consent to withdraw my Motions Nos. 4 and 6. We would take the feel of the House on