

Private Members' Business

These are just some of the many appointments that must be made by Governor in Council. Citizenship Court judges are another excellent example of those who perhaps should be vetted ahead of time rather than simply being given the plum by the particular party that happens to be in power, depending on the politics of the person involved. Yes, we sometimes get excellent appointments through the method presently in use. However as politicians we would get much better value for our money if these people were vetted very carefully by a selection process that took the politics out of it.

I am not suggesting that the final decision should not be made by the Governor in Council, the cabinet. I am saying that political alliance should not be the only criteria for appointments to some of the boards and commissions that I have named. These appointments have all been in the news just recently, appointments of chairpersons, presidents, directors, vice-chairmen, chairmen of some of these companies and boards over the last couple of months. There are many more.

This is a good bill, but it does not go quite far enough. I would like to see this whole thing investigated further, amendments made and the bill expanded.

Mr. Ross Belsher (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment the hon. member for Annapolis Valley—Hants for putting forward this bill this morning. I have listened carefully to the debate.

The proposed motion would include the name of the person appointed, the position or office filled and the salary that is to be paid to the person appointed. Bill C-290 further provides that the President of the Privy Council table in both Houses of Parliament a report containing the name and salary of every incumbent of an office or position appointed by the Governor in Council.

There were many points put forward by the member opposite which I support, particularly the portion on double-dipping. I am in wholehearted agreement with him.

I find it passing strange, when I listened to the member for Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt talk about how he would like to see it going on, because his party which is now in power in B.C. over the last several months has terminated many of the previous appointments before the terms were fulfilled and put its own appointees in

place. Yet this morning this member of that same party is standing here and saying he would like to see a far more open process.

There are some problems with this bill. I would like to discuss some of them in the next few minutes.

The key concern in this bill is the fact that it is proposing something that would be contrary to existing legislation contained in the Privacy Act. Clause 2 of Bill C-290 would require that the exact salary of the Governor in Council appointment be made public. The government at present cannot disclose this type of information without having regard to the Privacy Act which became law on July 1, 1983. The Privacy Act regulates the collection and the use of personal information by the federal government and imposes serious obligations on government institutions. We cannot simply ignore these obligations.

The Privacy Act says that personal information cannot be disclosed unless the individual to whom it relates consents. There is no discretionary element to this provision. It is not a choice we have. This section in the Privacy Act applies regardless of whether the personal information is being released pursuant to a request under the Privacy Act or whether the release is decided upon by the government institution itself.

There are of necessity certain circumstances upon which personal information may be released without consent. They are laid out in section 8(2) of the Privacy Act. Obviously we would not have to get consent if the information was required to comply with a warrant or if the information was going to an investigative body for the purpose of enforcing any law of Canada. This is not the case here. We are not talking about information that is required for investigative purposes. The only other way that personal information can be disclosed without the individual's consent is if the public interest in the disclosure clearly outweighs any invasion of privacy that could result from the disclosure.

• (1200)

Since I came to this House we have already been given the ability to examine appointments. Many people are brought before various standing committees of the House but by and large the vast majority of appointments go ahead unchallenged and unexamined by the members of this House.