

Courts Amendment Act

Before turning briefly to the Bill I would also like to recognize the tremendous contribution to Canada of Mr. Justice Ritchie who, in this past week, has retired because of ill health nearly a year before the expiration of his term. He is a brilliant man from a very distinguished family who has done a tremendous job in that court. On behalf of my Party I also want to send him our good wishes that the decision he has made to withdraw from the heavy responsibility of being a Supreme Court judge will assist him in his recovery and that he will indeed enjoy many years of happy and productive retirement.

● (1140)

I had the good fortune to have Ken McFarlane as an executive assistant for a few months. He is an individual who worked as Mr. Justice Ritchie's law clerk. I could see, from Ken's approach to the law, the type of integrity, vigour, discipline and endless hours of work that Mr. Justice Ritchie applied to the Public Service on the highest bench in our land. Again, I wish him a speedy recovery and many years of good health.

Starting with this Bill, as I have indicated, I want to begin the practice that I hope to be able to follow of not objecting just for the sake of objecting. One great reason to commend this Bill is that in respect of virtually all of its provisions it is identical to good Liberal legislation which was already on the Order Paper when the election was called.

I have nothing further to say about it except that I look forward to briefs being submitted before the committee by interested groups. I close as I began by wishing the Minister well but not too well in his term as Minister of Justice.

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, I too commence my remarks today by congratulating the Minister of Justice (Mr. Crosbie) on his appointment to that very important portfolio. I think all Members of the House are aware of the unbridled enthusiasm with which he has approached that important responsibility so far. We will be looking with great interest at the initiatives he will be taking in the near future as outlined in the Speech from the Throne as well as in the remarks he has made today.

I was somewhat surprised that the Minister was able to be as expansive as he was on a Bill which I had initially regarded as being somewhat technical in nature. Of course, given the Minister's history, I suppose that is not particularly surprising.

Of course, I should also thank the Minister because he honoured my constituents and I with his presence in Burnaby on a number of occasions. In fact, prior to 1978 he came to Burnaby and was invited to support the local candidate. At that time I won very narrowly. In 1980 he was invited back twice. Following that, the majority doubled. I want to particularly thank the Minister on this occasion because in the last election it was decided that the heavy hitter would be brought in. When the heavy hitter, the present Minister of Justice, was brought in on several occasions to do battle with the forces of darkness in Burnaby, of course the majority tripled. Therefore

I want to extend a cordial invitation to the Minister of Justice to visit Burnaby on many, many occasions in the future in order that that trend might continue.

Mr. Crosbie: They will come to their senses.

Mr. Robinson: I also want to congratulate the Hon. Member for York Centre (Mr. Kaplan) on his appointment as spokesperson for the Liberal Party on justice. I certainly hope that the sensitivity to civil liberties which he displayed so clearly in his term as Solicitor General will continue in his new capacity as critic of the Ministry of Justice.

While I will not go on at great length with respect to this particular Bill, I believe that the Minister might want to enlighten us about subsection (3), subsection (a) and subsection (ii). We can wait for that enlightenment in due course.

I look forward to co-operating with the Government when it introduces good legislation on those rare occasions; and of course, on behalf of my caucus and joined by my caucus colleagues, to oppose vigorously legislation which is bad.

The Minister stated that there is an appointment forthcoming to the Supreme Court of Canada. I join with the Minister and the Hon. Member for York Centre in wishing Mr. Justice Ritchie well in the future. He has made an outstanding contribution to justice in this country. I urge the Minister and the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) to very seriously consider sending an early signal of the Government's recognition of the importance of the equality of women in this country by the appointment of a second woman to the Supreme Court of Canada. I certainly hope that the Minister and the Prime Minister will seriously consider the appointment of one of the outstanding women who are active in the judiciary and law in the Maritimes.

At the same time I believe we must seriously consider the method of appointment. We must look very seriously at ways of reforming the method of judicial appointment in this country, such as the possibility of involving Parliament. The Prime Minister has indicated on a number of occasions that he believes it is important that Parliament play a role in the nomination of important positions in our society, particularly at a time when the Charter of Rights involves some very significant, social and indeed economic questions. I believe it is appropriate that the mechanism for the appointment of judges be re-examined.

I note with interest that the old Liberal patronage and appointment of Crown agents appears to be alive and well. The Minister of Justice has already issued an early edict which states that the Liberals are to be disbanded and that he will be appointing his Tory cronies to take their place. It is interesting to note that a Government that has expressed its outcry about patronage is already placing its friends in those little plum positions right across the country.

There will be many opportunities in the course of this Parliament to speak at greater length about some of the important questions of legislation that the Minister has addressed, but I want to indicate at this time that we certainly