

Auditor General Act

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): I do not understand, Mr. Speaker. When I asked a question of you, Mr. Speaker, you intimated that I was on that particular point. I wanted to add that it was simply that the recommendation in the bill is not a great recital, and that if one is not on the list of the elected, one must consider oneself to be non-elected. It states:

—and for the purposes set out in a measure entitled “an act respecting the office of the Auditor General of Canada and matters related or incidental thereto”.

The field is wide open.

Mr. Speaker: Of course, there are some major concerns about new concepts being introduced into the statutory law, not only of this act but those which affect other statutes. In any case, I will have to examine them carefully and return to the House as soon as I can. This leaves us with motions Nos. 5, 6 and 7 for consideration. Motion No. 5 is in the name of the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin). Perhaps the House might want to consider it at this time.

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I must admit right away—and I hope Your Honour will take judicial notice of this—that when I believe I am wrong, I always say so; but when I do not admit I am wrong, there is a fair presumption that I may be right. Clause 11 of the bill reads:

The Auditor General may, if in his opinion such an assignment does not interfere with his primary responsibilities, whenever the governor in council so requests, enquire into—

At the committee stage I had two amendments. One read, “whenever the governor in council or the House of Commons so requests”. Then I proceeded to follow that with motion No. 5, which stated:

“(2) Notice by the House of Commons under this section shall be deemed to be given when not less than 50 members have filed a request with the Speaker to the effect that the Auditor General enquire into and report on a matter”

It is quite obvious that without the first part of the motion, the rest is meaningless. In other words, if there is no reference to the House of Commons inserted in subclause (1) of clause 11 that the House of Commons, as well as the governor in council, has the right to make a request if in its infinite wisdom it thinks it is necessary that the Auditor General should make an inquiry, the rest of the motion is meaningless.

I am, of course, in the hands of my friends and enemies—I do not know where they sit on either side of the House—but without the first part of the amendment, which got lost in the woodwork between the committee and here, it is useless for me to proceed with motion No. 5. I simply ask Your Honour to ask for the consent of the House and of the minister to have this issue brought forth and discussed, because it would take the unanimous consent of the House for me to be able to move, at this stage, the first part of the change in the clause, namely, that the House of Commons, as well as the governor in council, should have the right to make this request of the Auditor General.

Mr. Speaker: Do I understand the hon. member to say that the amendment was put forward in the committee, but was lost?

Mr. Baldwin: No, I was away and it did not come forward here. I brought forward 11 or 12 amendments in the committee. This is one which was part of the other clause, but was not carried.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I gather, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. member is saying that by oversight subclause (1) has been omitted from what is now before us. That being the case, I certainly hope the House will consent to the hon. member presenting his motion in the form he wanted to present it, that is, including a subclause (1).

Mr. Speaker: I wonder if there might possibly be some consultation on that point. Clearly, the procedures of the report stage allow an hon. member to restore before the House motions that might have been put forward in the committee. Evidently, what has happened here is that the hon. member has put forward the substance of his motion without consequential aspects which give the sense and meaning intended in the amendment he proposed before the committee. In the circumstances, in order to give the hon. member permission at this stage to change the text of his amendment to restore its full meaning, the consent of the House would have to be given. Does the hon. member have the consent of the House to do that?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Baldwin: May I read my amendment? I move:

That in the fourth line of clause 11 at page 5 of the bill, after the words “governor in council” the words “or the House of Commons” be added.

Let me point out, Mr. Speaker, that with due respect I put the words “House of Commons” after governor in council, where it belongs.

Mr. Speaker: It is understood that the text of the motion of the hon. member will have to be amended in order to give a proper description to his intention. But for the purpose of this discussion the House can assume that this will be done, and when the question is put the amendment will include language which will achieve the objective of inserting in line 4 of clause 11 on page 5 of the bill, after the word “council”, the words “or the House of Commons”, and that the rest of the subclause will continue; and that the same amendment moved by the hon. member as motion no. 5 will add subclause (2) to clause 11 as stated in motion No. 5. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion?

Mr. Baldwin: I see I carried the government as far as I can. Now I will have to work a little harder to persuade them to adopt my motion. Mr. Speaker, I want to call attention to the present effect of clause 11, which reads as follows:

● (1650)

The Auditor General may, if in his opinion such an assignment does not interfere with his primary responsibilities, whenever the governor in council so requests, inquire into and report on any matter relating to the financial affairs of Canada or to public property or inquire into and report on any person or organization that has received financial aid from the government of Canada or in respect of which financial aid from the government of Canada is sought.