

House of Commons Act

"Economy and the Speaker and Deputy Speaker shall be deemed to remain in office as such, as if there had been no dissolution, until another member is appointed in his place".

The Deputy Chairman: Shall the amendment carry?

Mr. Ouellet: Mr. Chairman, I would like the Government House Leader to clarify something for me. Clause 18 reads:

On a dissolution of Parliament, every member of the Board of International Economy shall continue in office—

It seems to me that "every member" includes the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker, two members of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, the Leader of the Opposition or his nominee and four other members. That is the composition of the Board which is found in Clause 15(3). I am wondering why the Government House Leader has to repeat on lines 18 and 19 of Clause 18 on page 3 the names of the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker. I believe that is redundant. The previous lines state "every member", including the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker. I would like the Government House Leader to clarify that.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to provide an explanation. That matter was raised with me in a different context. I read the Bill and thought, along the same line of reasoning enunciated by the Hon. Member for Papineau, that there would not likely be a problem. However, Clause 15 states:

(1) There shall be a Board of International Economy of the House of Commons, over which the Speaker of the House of Commons shall preside.

That was one reason for which I thought there should be some provision for the Speaker to continue in office, notwithstanding dissolution, so there would be no question as to who would be the Chairperson of committees. In addition, if the Hon. Member would look at the present House of Commons Act, we are deleting from that legislation a provision which has the effect of keeping the Speaker in charge of the administration of the House after dissolution. My judgment was that I should bring forward this amendment, out of abundant caution, to ensure that there would be no question upon dissolution that the Speaker would remain in charge of the administration of the House and as Chairperson of committees. I share the logic and the reason of the Hon. Member, but I was persuaded, out of abundant caution, that we should move the amendment.

Mr. Deans: Mr. Chairman, I would like to say two things. I agree that the amendment is redundant, however, I do not see that it would do any harm. With that in mind, we would be prepared to pass the amendment.

I can remember when I was elected to the House of Commons and we were involved in a discussion on the Board of International Economy. It struck me as passing strange, coming from the Ontario Legislature where opposition Members had been a part of the administration of the Legislature, that the House of Commons did not have opposition participation on matters which were not only government, but matters which affected every Member of Parliament.

● (2230)

I recall one evening speaking in the House on that very topic. I felt it would be appropriate at some point to amend the Board of Commissioners to include Members of the Opposition in order that everyone could feel, as decisions were made, that they had some input into the decision-making process which affects every day of our lives.

I want to say that this change is one which I believe, and certainly hope, will be of benefit to every Hon. Member for the first time, without passing any judgment on the capacity of those who served before. For the first time individual Members of Parliament will be represented on the Board of Internal Economy of the House of Commons. The concerns of individual Members will be able to be brought to that board. I anticipate—in fact, I expect—that the board will operate in a totally non-partisan way, that it will operate on the question of merit and not on the question of politics, and that the decisions made by that board will be seen by every Member of Parliament to have been made without consideration for the source of the suggestion or whether it was presented by the Opposition or by government supporters or by the Cabinet. I am sure that the Cabinet itself will come to live with the new reality that while those Members continue to be the Government of Canada, Parliament itself has its own administration representing all Hon. Members. I think this is a truly great step forward.

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Chairman, I just have a few comments and perhaps one question. I fully endorse the comments made by the House Leader for the New Democratic Party. There is no doubt that this is a great improvement to parliamentary affairs.

I would just like to reiterate that I take it that all members of the Board of Internal Economy will have the same status, that some members will not have more status than others. Of course, under the Financial Administration Act, that may be a little difficult to reconcile but, nevertheless, I take it the House Leader will confirm that there will not be some members of that Board of Internal Economy who will be of, say, advisory status rather than some others. That is, the Ministers will not impose themselves, as they sometimes do, by their presence and their authority.

Perhaps the President of the Privy Council can answer this question. Clause 18(1) of Bill C-63 reads:

On September 9, 1986, Sections 15 to 18 shall stand referred to such Committee of the House of Commons as may be designated or established for the purpose—

I take it there is no time limit attached to when the committee must report to the House after its review of the operation of these new amendments, is that correct? There is no time limit attached to the review process?

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Mr. Speaker, in answer to the first question, there will be no first class or second class members. There will be only one category of members and they will be full participants.