

reports), be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the parliamentary secretary brought me in on his conference because I certainly did not realize the procedure would be other than the disposition of Bill C-206.

An article by Geoffrey Stevens appeared in the *Globe and Mail* on October 26 dealing with the subject of private members' hour, in which he referred to members who bring bills as "candidates for oblivion". I think he was quite correct because this private members' hour could be called an hour of frustration notwithstanding the fact that it does give members of parliament an opportunity to bring forth matters which they consider important to the Canadian people.

I should like to read the concluding paragraph of Mr. Stevens' article which is right on point. He said:

Although some of these bills will eventually be debated, (for one hour), they all have one thing in common—none will become law unless the government decides to take them over. Unless you subscribe to the quaint notion that the only people in Ottawa who are capable of thinking are those who inhabit the treasury benches, you have to be concerned about the short shrift given private members' bills. It's one more argument for a real reform of parliamentary procedure.

I certainly agree with that and I am sure all hon. members do, Mr. Speaker. I hope that the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), who has indicated his interest in and concern about the role of parliamentary procedure, will read that paragraph and take it seriously.

The explanatory note to Bill C-206 reads as follows:

The purpose of this bill is to establish a right in the public—vested in Parliament—to reports made by Commissions appointed under the Inquiries Act. Under the present law, a commission only reports to the Government which thereafter voluntarily releases the report in its own time.

I sincerely believe it essential in a participatory democracy that the public have access to information compiled by government, provided such information does not affect national security or matters which are, without question, confidential.

The bill I bring before the House this afternoon will commend itself to you, Mr. Speaker. It entails no expenditure of public funds out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund. On the contrary, Mr. Speaker, this bill, if passed, will ensure that another fund, the fund of public knowledge, will wax fat with the pearls of wisdom, gems of wit, and nuggets of information continually brought forth by royal commissions.

Getting down to the substance of the bill, it would first ensure that a report by a commission appointed under the Inquiries Act be made public by tabling in both Houses of Parliament; second, that the publication of a report would not be delayed but be tabled in both Houses within 15 days after its completion; and third, that there be an opportunity to debate a report within a time limit after it is tabled upon motion of ten members in either House. I would hope that all hon. members would look upon these criteria with favour.

Having regard to the report of the commission which inquired into Canadian security measures and procedures, and in fact the procedure followed by that commission in its own report, there is a provision in the bill that a

Inquiries Act

commission—if so authorized in its terms of reference—may omit from its report published in the House any matter that may be prejudicial to the safety or interests of Canada. The uncensored report would, of course, go to the Contemporary Secretary of State.

I do not propose, Mr. Speaker, to delve at length into the history of our Inquiries Act. My recollection is that it came to us from the United Kingdom by way of the province of Upper Canada. I do not believe it was amended over the years since its passage in the early years of Confederation except perhaps to consolidate part I and II with part II which relates to inquiries by a minister within his own department. The United Kingdom, however, amended its legislation many years ago to provide for publication of a commission's report. The amendment was made after a government got into trouble by withholding a report.

In the hundred years of Confederation from 1867 to 1966 there were 396 commissions under the Inquiries Act. Excluded from this total are the several hundred commissions appointed to investigate charges of political partizanship, and many pre-1948 commissions involving the revocation of naturalization or of citizenship. My authority for these figures is George F. Henderson's "Federal Royal Commission in Canada, 1867-1966—a Checklist". Information provided by the Library of Parliament adds four more commissions, in the period 1967 to mid-1974, for a total of 400 commissions exclusive, as previously mentioned, of those commissions relating to political partizanship and citizenship.

Mr. Henderson's introduction to his "Checklist," although only seven pages in length, is interesting reading. The following quotation from page xv is relevant:

Today many royal commissions have become temporary government departments. To a large extent this change from the earlier, simpler form, with a few commissioners, a secretary and a stenographer who recorded evidence, has occurred because of the greater importance now attached to the gathering of data and to the preparation of "special studies". The first commission to prepare numerous studies—18 in its case—was the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations (1937-1940). To date the largest number of special studies has been issued by the Royal Commission on Canada's Economic Prospect (1955-57)—33 in all.

Then Mr. Henderson speaks of his difficulties in locating many of the diverse reports. At page xvi, he says:

... With the compilation of the list completed the task of locating the reports commenced. About half of them were readily available either in the Sessional Papers series or as separate publications. The others which have been discovered turned up in various places from sets of private papers to the departmental files of the federal government.

In spite of this added effort only 300 out of 400 royal commission reports could be located... There is consequently little doubt that copies of many of the elusive reports are hidden away in collections of private papers or in other unlikely repositories.

That is one reason for my introduction of this bill, Mr. Speaker. There should be a specified public depository for all commission reports. This bill provides that the depository shall be parliament. Mr. Henderson's introduction alerts me to the fact that the bill may be deficient. It does not deal with the problem arising from the modern trend of commissions to issue "interim reports" and "special studies".

Nor does the bill deal with that recent phenomenon, Mr. Speaker, the ubiquitous "task force," so-called. The