

Senate and House of Commons Act

in maintaining decorum, which may not always appear to be the case, but I do think that that interest is there, but also to the manner in which the current Speaker works to diffuse potentially difficult situations, rather than letting them mount to the point where the only way to restore order is by naming a Member and suspending him or her from the sitting, thereby ejecting them from the House.

I must say that, upon reflection, to some extent I take issue with what may be implied by the Hon. Member's remarks, that is, that it happens frequently nowadays that Members, in order to gain publicity, deliberately seek to have themselves named and ejected from the House. I cannot say that this has never happened over the history of Parliament but it is certainly not the case nowadays, not according to my own observations. While it may be argued that the remedy proposed in the Hon. Member's Bill would be a useful tool in maintaining the decorum of the House and in discouraging Hon. Members from getting themselves named and ejected, I think it could honestly be asked whether this additional sanction proposed in the Hon. Member's Bill is necessary if one looks at the number of times in the past 12 months, or for that matter in the past 24 months, that Hon. Members have actually been named and ejected from the House. I think if we look at those statistics we will find that this has happened very rarely.

• (1710)

I predict that this is likely to be the case in future, dependent of course on the way the Speaker of the day works to defuse situations rather than to allow them to build up to the point that it is necessary to restore order by naming an Hon. Member and actually having that Member ejected from the House for the day or the remainder of the sitting.

While I think the Hon. Member has raised an interesting point and while I should like to see it studied further, I want to place on record my view that we are not, currently at least, faced with a situation where a clear case has been made for an additional sanction to prevent people from trying to get themselves named and removed from the House in order to seek publicity.

I do not want to see people doing that deliberately. I think that should be discouraged, but I think we should examine to what extent this is actually happening or is likely to happen in future.

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Madam Speaker, I was very pleased to hear the House Leader of the Liberal Party indicate that he thinks there may indeed be good reason to study the matter further. I should like to congratulate the Hon. Member for Edmonton West (Mr. Dorin). I think he brought the matter forward for the first time some time ago. His persistence over three and a half years is laudable.

I think most thoughtful Members of the Chamber value very highly the authority of the Speaker, the necessity of the Speaker, and the role the Speaker plays in our proceedings. With 282 strong-minded individuals—and after the next election there will be about 13 more—it is easy sometimes to envision chaos because feelings run deep and strong.

In my close to nine years in the Chamber I have seen some of that. I guess the strongest feelings I saw were related to amendments to the Canadian Constitution some years ago, back in the early part of the 1980s. Feelings ran deep and the job of the Speaker was very difficult indeed. I think situations like that led the parliamentary reform committee, which has served the House so admirably since the last election in bringing forward progressive and positive changes, to recommend some changes in the authority of the Speaker to name Members.

Members may recall when they were first elected, those who came to the House in 1984 and those of us who served earlier, that the Speaker would name a Member. That step in the Chamber had to be followed by a motion, which usually came from the Government House Leader and most often resulted in a standing vote. We were really voting to uphold the ruling of the Speaker to suspend a Member for the balance of the sitting day. That was the usual form of the motion, although historically I think there are some precedents where the motion has called for longer periods of time.

The reform committee, supported, I think it is fair to say, by all three Parties in the House, decided that the Speaker on the Speaker's own initiative when dealing with repeated actions by Hon. Members which disregard the authority of the Chair should indeed have the authority to name a Member. The second part of the suggestion of the reform committee—and it was picked up by the House and is now part of our Standing Orders—is that the Speaker could then call upon the Sergeant-at-Arms to ensure that the Speaker's order was carried out if in those rare instances a Member refused to comply with the naming.

We have taken it away from the authority of the House in terms of the Commons. The old system still applies in the Senate, in that the Senate works under the system which was prevalent in this Chamber prior to the latest changes in our Standing Orders.

I think we have all applauded that. I think the last time, just in a statistical sense, that someone was named in the Chamber was on June 11, 1986. That is getting close to two years ago. That is a distinct improvement over the first couple of years of the life of this House when there was a great deal of discourse, a great deal of naming, and a great deal of disregard for the authority of the Chair which indeed, as the Hon. Member for Edmonton West pointed out, resulted in publicity on almost each and every occasion for the Member who chose to disregard the authority of the Chair.

We are facing another election soon and subsequent thereto we may indeed have many new Members in the Chamber who