

*Private Members' Business*

functions? This is my second reason, which I mentioned earlier, for objecting to the bill.

I want to relate certain events in the life of three members of Parliament, all of which are true and none which will reveal the name of the member of Parliament. These stories will demonstrate why the fulfilment of parliamentary functions cannot be accounted for in dollars and cents.

The first has to do with a member who is no longer sitting in this House. He represented a riding in northern Ontario and several times a year he was able to organize visits to this place by his young native constituents. He would work tirelessly through the year with local service organizations to raise money to pay the fare of these young constituents and then he would cajole and bend some arms of his fellow MPs to have these young people stay with them while they were in Ottawa. These constituents would come to Parliament and watch this place in action. A colleague would take them in to Question Period, he would guide them into the Senate, he would sit with them in committee.

Over the course of several days this member of Parliament would pay for their meals. The constituents coming from small Indian reserves in northern Ontario would not have been able to feed themselves while away from home. This member wanted these young people to experience the democratic process of this place. He wanted them to see how Parliament worked. He paid for this from his salary and his expense allowance. Those are the hard facts and figures.

But how do we account for the hours and hours of effort in making the arrangements for these teenagers to come to Ottawa? How do we account for the patience and energy required to host these students and the simple spending of time with them?

The second story is a more recent one, Mr. Speaker. A member told me that his referendum committee from this fall did not break even. It needed more contributions to be able to pay off its debts. Regardless of what position any of the elected members of Parliament took in the referendum, we all recognized the right of Canadians to participate in it and the extraordinary exercise in democracy that the referendum was. We all gladly contributed our days and nights and every last bit of energy and wit

we had to that exercise. Can we account in dollars and cents for that energy and wit?

Let us return to the question of the debt of the committee. How would that MP help that referendum committee in his riding? Well, he will organize and attend functions to raise the money necessary to pay off the debts.

My third story has to do with a member who is significantly interested in the legislative role of the MP. I know that over the course of three months on a major bill he met in committee three times per week, returning to his riding on each weekend to meet with his constituents. This MP's expenses were quite different from the previous two MPs. They were lower because of all his time spent in committee, interacting with policy experts and public servants in developing the best possible laws for this country.

The point of these stories is that each of us fulfils our function in different ways. That is one of the freedoms and the pleasures of being a member of Parliament. The way in which we fulfil our functions has different costs attached to them. It is not for me to say that my colleague who held so dearly the role of educating his young constituents about Parliament should not have done this because his expenditures might have been higher than those of another MP.

Could we say that the MP who spends more time in committee is a better MP because his costs are less than others? What is it we are measuring here?

Mr. Speaker, I would submit that a dollar accounting comparison between two MPs would not in the slightest reveal the value for dollar which the Auditor General says is the true measure of an accounting system.

The Auditor General stated in his 1991 audit of the House of Commons that he did not go beyond the documentation to consider the merits of individual transactions. I do not believe that anyone could. I do not believe that anyone could place a value on how each of us interprets and carries out our representative role.

In the 1992 report of the Auditor General he enunciated three over-all criteria for information for Parliament. These are relevancy, reliability and understandability.