

House of Commons

about which the hon. member for Wellington South has spoken. That program has been sponsored by the American Political Science Association and financed by the Ford Foundation and other groups and it provides Senators and members of the House of Representatives with an additional source of assistance.

The program to which I have referred is one which might well be studied by those who are interested in how the mechanics of such a suggestion as the one we are now discussing might be worked out. As hon. members know, in addition to the facilities of the library of Congress research branch, which functions in a manner similar to the one recently set up in our parliamentary library, congressman and senators are provided with funds with which to engage administrative assistants who help in such things as correspondence, problems of constituents both personal and otherwise, the gathering of material for speeches and in dealing with government departments on behalf of constituents as well as analysing legislation. As has already been mentioned, senators and congressmen also have very large secretarial and office staffs to help them. They seem to be very much better off in this way than we are.

Speaking from that viewpoint alone, and as I have said I support the suggestion by the hon. member wholeheartedly, I wonder whether this motion goes far enough to provide the facilities which are required at this time and certainly will be required in future by members of parliament. The 12th report of the special committee on procedure and organization, submitted on October 7, 1964, suggested that the ideal situation would involve one assistant for every ten members of parliament and that the functions of the researcher would include the preparation of statistical data, the investigation of the pros and cons of any argument referred to him, the summarizing of press comments and the provision of notes for speeches. While I should not like to underrate the value of such a service, it seems to me that we would be doing every member of parliament, and particularly the backbenchers, a great service by allowing them to engage a qualified person who would have closer contact with the member for whom he worked and would be more partisan in the best sense of that word and thus better equipped to help his member or group of members. Under the system of

research assistance in the library of parliament members have no choice in the selection of those who are to participate. Would it not be better to allow us some choice in the selection of those who are to serve us?

I could go on but I should like to see this motion come to a vote this evening. For that reason I will resume my seat and allow other members to comment.

Mr. J. B. Stewart (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, I, too, hoped that this motion would come to a vote and I am confident that it would have come to a vote had it not been for the fact that the hon. member for Saskatoon (Mr. Brand) gave the house a rather distorted impression of its purpose. It would be unfortunate to vote on it while that impression remains.

The hon. member dealt with the motion as though its purpose were to provide assistance to the members of the House of Commons. I do not think that is primarily the intention of the hon. member for Wellington South (Mr. Hales). His intention is surely more important, and one which I think inevitably would commend itself to every member of this house.

There is no doubt that we ought to try to provide people engaged in political science, journalists, members of universities' law faculties, and others with an opportunity to come to Ottawa and participate, vicariously if you will, in the operation of parliament. This would not be an easy thing to work out; and I do not think the congressional fellowship program in the United States provides us with all the instructive parallel desirable because their system of government is very different from ours.

It would be very worthwhile for these interns to hear one of our better informed members, the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Churchill), talk about the constitutional role of the House of Commons and more generally the parliament in our system of government. Some of us heard him speak the other evening very accurately on this matter. I am sure that many members of the House of Commons and of the press gallery were edified by what he said. He showed quite clearly that we have a very much more complicated system of government than the American and one in which it would be more difficult to introduce a program for interns. I wonder, for example, how suitable many members of parliament, given