

of times. I therefore want to make it perfectly clear that I have nothing to do with that procedure and will not have anything to do with it for those obvious reasons.

Two other matters are raised, however. The second one was whether the hon. member, feeling aggrieved by a decision in committee, on procedural grounds has any other remedy. I cannot accept the argument that he has other remedy and that the report of the committee only serves the majority. Indeed, when a committee report is tabled in the House—if in fact it is tabled in the House—there is an opportunity at that time for the hon. member to raise questions either by way of concurrence or by debate upon concurrence in a particular report. I recognize some limitations in respect to estimates which are deemed to be reported by a certain date if in fact they are not reported. There is that right, however, at least in theory.

The third point touched upon by the hon. member is the general right of a member to put questions not to the minister but to the minister's officials. That raises a procedure which, in conformity with our practices up to this time, certainly has been that it is the minister who has responsibility to parliament and questions are put to him. That is an area which I am prepared to examine, however, to see whether there is any substance in the argument that a member of the House of Commons, putting questions in the process of the examination of estimates, ought not to be confined to putting questions to the minister but ought to be able to put questions to the officials in the presence of the minister. That is not a matter on which I can lay down directions, but it is certainly one which I can examine to see if I can be of help to the House. I certainly undertake to do that on the general proposition.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, with respect, you used the words "and his officials," which might involve the question of the minister with respect to a public servant in the ordinary course of events. I want to make sure it is understood that this is a Crown corporation, in which there may be a different relationship.

Mr. Speaker: I understand.

MR. DINSDALE—MINISTERS' PRESS CONFERENCE

Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris): Mr. Speaker, I should like to raise a point of order relating to a matter which occurred in this House yesterday. Bill C-45 was considered and passed expeditiously. In fact the discussion only occupies about two inches of space in the official *Hansard* report.

Immediately following consideration of that item of business, the Postmaster General (Mr. Lamontagne) and the Minister of Labour (Mr. Munro) proceeded to a press conference at which they announced the government would be conducting a special investigation into the advisability of setting up a committee to pursue a study of a Crown corporation organization for the Post Office.

I know that complaints are made from time to time about the responsibility of ministers to make such announcements in the House of Commons, particularly when they relate to

controversial issues. The Postmaster General is new to the job and perhaps does not understand this long established tradition, but certainly the Minister of Labour has been here long enough to know that on a matter of such substance an opportunity should be provided for hon. members to hear the statement and make a suitable response.

This is particularly true when members of the opposition for a long time now and on many occasions, have made precisely the same suggestion, that the Post Office Department be converted into a Crown corporation in order to deal with the growing malaise in the postal service which is all too evident. Furthermore, this is a matter which has been considered by various studies, going back to 1969. The latest of these, the Hay report, which we discussed in this House only last week, specifically recommends that a study of this kind be pursued.

Under the circumstances we must conclude that both Bill C-45 and the announcement made outside the House are not designed to deal with the fundamental causes of trouble in the Post Office Department, causes such as deteriorating service, decreasing business, increasing rates, growing confrontation between management and labour, and so forth. Obviously these things are being done as an election posture and I do not think this is in the best interests of resolving the problems in the Post Office. In fact, the decision seems to have been made so hurriedly and without planning that I had difficulty obtaining the press release which was issued yesterday. A copy has only now come into my hands, after having sought it all morning. A note on the bottom of it reads, "This amends the previous release of today." So even after the initial press statement was made there was a change of mind by the government.

I raise the issue because the matter of reliable and efficient postal service has become of great concern to a growing number of people in Canada. I do not think it is good enough to avoid the responsibility of discussion in the House of Commons, and I do not think it is good enough to posture for election purposes. This sort of cynicism will only aggravate the problem rather than resolve it.

Mr. Alan Martin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, it seems to me that rather than members being concerned about the manner in which this announcement was made, they should recognize it as a response to something that has been sought, not only by members of the opposition but by members on this side, including myself, on numerous occasions.

Bill C-45 was not intended to deal with that particular matter so it seems appropriate to me that the two ministers should come together quickly after the passage of the bill and announce the wishes of parliament were being adhered to and that a formal study of the matter of converting the Post Office into a Crown corporation would be undertaken immediately. I hope the results of that study will be made available to members of parliament when parliament reconvenes in the fall.