

*Procedure Committee Report*

aware that parliament would work better if we had only two parties. However, in view of the presence of the smaller parties I suggest that there could be some streamlining of the procedures of the house, particularly from the point of view of bringing about a change whereby all parties would not have to make statements on motions every day. This might save a little time.

The multiplicity of parties makes the question period last longer because each party has a particular line to pursue. I suggest that all of these factors must be taken into consideration before we start making fundamental changes in the rules.

This committee suggests that some of its recommendations might seem radical, and I agree with the hon. member for Hull (Mr. Caron) who said that radical changes in the house are not to be rushed into and undertaken lightly. When I spoke of perspective, this is exactly what I was referring to because I think everybody has rushed to welcome the recommendations as though they were the best thing possible.

During his remarks the Prime Minister said there is a tendency today toward seeking short cut, totalitarian solutions to problems. I suggest he was guilty of doing exactly that, which of course fits in with the entire course of conduct and policy of his government. It fits the Liberal pattern of blaming everything on parliament rather than on government.

I suggest that we all take a good close look at these recommended changes. I am not being facetious when I suggest that it is not in the stiffness in the rules that the problem lies but in the way the rules are applied. The difficulties which we experience in committees now could be overcome without any substantial change in the rules.

One of the recommendations is that a panel of committee chairmen be established, but we do not need to have a change in the rules to get that done. It would seem to me to be a matter of common sense, but I have never seen any indication that committee chairmen co-operate with one another in any respect.

I can remember one morning when I was supposed to be attending three committees, all of which were sitting at the same time. That is just ridiculous. I have known the banking and commerce and the foreign affairs committees to meet simultaneously for three straight months. I was supposed to be a member of both and interested in both, but it was impossible to attend both on that basis. Is a change in rules required to set up such a panel of chairmen? Is there

[Mr. Nugent.]

anything to stop the Prime Minister from establishing it?

If the government, which really has the responsibility to make the house work properly, wanted to do it, all that is required is to call the chairmen of committees together either through the house leaders or party whips.

The Prime Minister made a special comment on one part of the committee's report dealing with limitation of time on estimates, and said he thought it would be very nice to have such an arrangement. Then he went further and suggested time should be allocated to each item as it arose. Experience with this government has led me to the conclusion that any time we make an agreement with it for a time limit on anything, we make a dreadful blunder. From that moment on any chance of getting information or co-operation vanishes. This happens when you are dealing with a government that makes it a practice to show its contempt for parliament, which does everything it can to ruin this institution. When we have a government like that then the only weapon we have is in debate, to keep on talking, if necessary to hold up supply, and we have a duty to the house and the country not to give up that weapon.

I for one would like to see a lot less time taken on estimates, but you have only to take a look at last year's debates to see why it took so long to pass some of them. Some of the ministers just would not give us any information. I refer again to that agricultural matter. I know I was up on my feet for weeks every time I got a chance, and when you have to hound and hound for weeks and weeks to get a little bit of information then passage of estimates is going to take a long time.

The Prime Minister suggests that we should limit the time spent on estimates, but I suggest a responsible prime minister should say, "We will co-operate with parliament, for a change." I am not in favour of limiting the time for estimates, and with this government in office I am not in favour of allocating set times for certain procedures. With a responsible government in power, if one could rely on the word of the prime minister, and on the word of the house leader to do exactly what they said, if one could rely on the various cabinet ministers to show some co-operation, then there is no reason why allocation of time could not be worked out; but I do not want to see that put in the rules. It might be possible with a responsible and