

Procedure Committee Report

Some hon. members would attend to the business of those committees while other hon. members would be in their constituencies.

And the paragraph goes on:

It is not proposed that the sittings of committee be confined only to those periods when the house stands adjourned.

Mr. Speaker, this means that committees will sit while the house is sitting. I do not think it is the lack of business, the limited number of committees or even the absence of hon. members that keep committees from sitting as soon as possible after the opening of the session. I do not think there would be any advantage, or that the business of the house would be expedited, if hon. members at regular intervals were to take a week or two, not as holidays, but to go in their constituencies and meet their electors.

Mr. Speaker, paragraph 24 reads as follows:

Your committee recommends that the first suspension of sittings to take place during a session should occur within three weeks of the tabling of the main estimates, and that subsequent adjournments of two weeks duration should follow at regular intervals after each three weeks of sittings of the house.

Immediately after the three weeks following the discussion on the budget the members would have two weeks holidays.

I wonder if it would be likely to accelerate the business of the house. There are several countries in the world where sessions take place during specific periods. Instead of making such a suggestion, why not suggest that each session, for instance, should start in the middle of September, with a month adjournment during the Christmas season, instead of two months, and then be resumed until the end of June, when we would take two months off. That would enable the members to meet their electors in the summer season. In my opinion, that would be much more logical than taking two weeks off, after three weeks of session to go and see our voters.

I think that this procedure would help to expedite the business of the house.

Furthermore, most members are heads of families. It is during the months of July and August that the head of a family can be with his children who go to school, to college or to the university.

Therefore, from the human standpoint, besides the practical standpoint, as far as the business of the house is concerned I believe that less time would be wasted and that a session starting in mid-September and closing at the end of June or at the beginning of July

would be beneficial. The country would have everything to gain, members of parliament would cease to be robots as they have been in the past and as they are still today to some extent, and it would be a blessing for the country as a whole.

Those are the few remarks I wished to make, Mr. Speaker, concerning the fifteenth report of the committee on procedure and organization. I hope this matter will be considered seriously, not lightly, and that suggestions for improving working conditions in the House of Commons will be accepted in good faith, that they will not be considered as a political move but rather as being inspired by a sincere desire to improve the way in which parliamentary business is carried on.

As I said, such improvement will benefit the Canadian people and greatly help the people's representatives to look after their constituents, while having some social life of their own.

[Text]

Miss Pauline Jewett (Northumberland): As a member of the committee on procedure and organization, I should be grateful to have a few moments of the time of the house to say a few words about this fifteenth report. I do not intend to indulge in the kind of political haranguing that we have heard, particularly from the hon. member for Port Arthur (Mr. Fisher), because I do not really feel this will help us very much to change our ways either in this house or in the committees of the house. I felt that the hon. member for Port Arthur has really not addressed himself to this particular report. I was very pleased, however, when he said that he understood most of the members of his party were in favour of it.

The most important and significant part of the report relates to the proposed committee structure, what functions those committees will perform, the times when they will meet, their size and related matters. To some extent the hon. member who has just spoken, the hon. member for Villeneuve (Mr. Caouette), has referred to this particular aspect of the report. If I understood him correctly, it was the only aspect of the report to which he referred, although he made a lot of other general remarks.

I think it is important for us all to realize, Mr. Speaker, that this report presents certain particular guide lines for the reform of the committees system of this house, but that by passing or approving this report today we will not be implementing any of its