

Provisional Standing Orders

opposition House Leaders and, if I may be permitted to say so, by the officials at the Table who, as usual, have been outstanding in their co-operation and outstanding in the quality of work that they deliver to us on behalf of the people of Canada.

● (2210)

[Translation]

Hon. André Ouellet (Papineau): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak very briefly to the amendments to the Standing Orders proposed by the Government House Leader. First, I would like to thank him for the understanding and co-operation he extended to all Members of the McGrath Committee which presented this first report. Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind Hon. Members that the amendments being proposed today, in addition to being the subject of an unanimous recommendation by representatives of the three parties of this House in this Parliament, are also identical to amendments proposed in the previous Parliament by a committee chaired by Mr. Tom Lefebvre, now Senator Lefebvre, amendments which also received the unanimous approval of representatives of all three parties in this House. This means, Mr. Speaker, that today we are approving amendments to the Standing Orders of the House that have been approved unanimously twice in two successive Parliaments by representatives of the three political parties in this House.

I express the wish that these amendments contribute to improve parliamentary proceedings, but more particularly that those amendments contribute to highlight the role of ordinary Members, those who are commonly called back-benchers. If this parliamentary reform is to be valid, I think it is essential that the extraordinary talents of parliamentarians on both sides of the House be put to continuous and efficient use.

Too often men and women who had the confidence of their electors came here and before very long they felt frustrated. They realized to what extent our parliamentary system denied them the opportunity to make a valid and useful contribution to the administration of public affairs. I think that the Government is quite justified to launch this parliamentary reform project. Quite rightly, the Government House Leader pointed out that this is only the first report we are adopting today.

Over the next few weeks, of course, the Government will have to consider the second and third reports drafted by the committee under the chairmanship of the Hon. Member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) who has done an excellent job and has directed the work of the committee like a real professional. And since I have an opportunity to say it in this House, I paid homage to him at the last sitting of our committee, I want to do so again in the House as we are about to adopt these amendments which confirm the soundness of the recommendations of the first report. If we had to pay homage to a parliamentarian who particularly distinguished himself among all parliamentarians on the Government side, I would say that, far ahead of even the Prime Minister or

several Ministers, the Conservative Member who has been the most outstanding during the first session of this Parliament is the Hon. Member for St. John's East.

I hope that during the summer the Government will give particular consideration to the recommendations of the second and third reports. Mr. Speaker, I have no hesitation in saying that this parliamentary reform can be truly worthwhile only if the Government fully endorses not only the first but also the second and third reports.

I think the Government is to be commended for its wisdom in taking this first step and accepting the first report. I dare hope that before the end of 1985 we will all be able to rejoice about having accepted the very important recommendations which complement this first report and which the Government can find as well in the second and third reports presented by the committee on parliamentary reform.

I therefore want to congratulate the Government on its action today and say that we are impatiently waiting for its favourable reaction to the other recommendations that have been made to overhaul our parliamentary proceedings and give a leading role to the Members of the House of Commons in the administration of Canada.

[English]

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Hon. Government House Leader for his resounding applause. First, it is necessary for the House to recognize and fully understand the work done by this committee. In my opinion, it has been one of the hardest working committees that has ever been structured by the House of Commons. The committee devoted countless hours, and I do not think anyone appreciated it, to looking at matters that many people take for granted. Without the care and deliberation of the members of that committee, the intricacies of the House of Commons would be impossible for most of us to understand.

I would like to pay particular tribute to the Chairman of the Committee, the Hon. Member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath), as did my colleague, the Hon. Member for Papineau (Mr. Ouellet). The Hon. Member for St. John's East, when given the responsibility, took it with vigour and with dedication. He saw his task as being one of great significance and he lived up to it. I might say that he elevated the entire committee to his own level of concern and hard work.

I would also like to say to the Hon. Member for Papineau and to my good friend and colleague, the Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Birds Hill (Mr. Blaikie), who co-vice-chaired the committee, I know from having read the committee report and having watched the work of the committee that their leadership was of vital importance. They showed a capacity to rise above the normal partisanship that exists in politics to recognize the House of Commons for what it really must be. I hope that the good sense that was displayed throughout the deliberations of this committee will someday become the good sense that will be displayed within the House of Commons. I hope that the co-operation that the committee was able to develop