

Motion for Concurrence in Report

resolutions for the amendment of the different taxing acts and at some stage subsequent to the budget debate these resolutions have been considered and the bills given first reading. It is consistent with the committee's approach to the resolution stage that it should recommend that debate on these budget resolutions should be abandoned and that they should be put to the vote after the conclusion of the six-day budget debate or at such time thereafter as appears to be suitable.

In other respects, the business of ways and means would be transferred to the house and would be conducted with the Speaker in the chair, and after second reading all the various finance bills would be referred to a committee of the whole house.

The effect of the changes recommended and summarized thus far may be emphasized at this point. Although there are 365 days in the year, it is self-evident that parliament will not sit on all of these days and it is highly advisable that it should not do so because hon. members must keep in close contact with the constituencies they represent. Assuming members want to be in their constituencies during the summer, approximately four weeks at Christmas and two weeks at Easter, and making allowance for Saturdays, Sundays and statutory holidays, it seems that a reasonable number of sitting days would be approximately 160 to 170 in any year. Of this total, eight are occupied by the debate on the Speech from the Throne, six by the budget debate and, if these recommendations are adopted, 28 by the business of supply, a total of 42 days in all for general debate. I should have added earlier that your committee recommends that any days unused on the debate on the address or on the budget debate should be transferred to supply.

This leaves something like 125 days during the parliamentary year for the passage of legislation and the completion of other business of the house. This is by no means an inconsequential number of days but measured against the volume of legislation presented to this and previous parliaments it does not provide room for the luxury of wasted time.

The scheduling of parliamentary work is in no sense a new idea. It has been followed in Britain and elsewhere for many years and the Canadian parliament is one of the few major parliaments, if not the only one, lacking any procedure effective for the prior planning of its legislative and other programs.

I believe that most members agree that procedures should be adopted to permit the

[Mr. Blair.]

house to plan its work. Naturally different members have different ideas as to how this might be done. The basic proposals of your committee is that a proceedings committee be established consisting of the house leaders of each party in the house. I think it is important to point out that this committee will consist of the four house leaders treated as equals, and will not reflect the numerical proportions of the different parties in the house. This excludes the possibility of majority decisions by this committee.

● (4:30 p.m.)

It is recommended that the committee be chaired by the government house leader, that it meet generally twice a week, and that it make its reports to the house on most Thursdays. This committee, in its work, would have many advantages.

Under the new rules most of the legislation proposed by the government would be disclosed in detail early in the session. The publication of this legislation would not be held up by the necessity of waiting for approval at the resolution stage.

Placing less emphasis on the second reading debate, and the reference of most important legislation to standing committees would fully acquaint members of the house and the country of the significant features of legislation which was under discussion.

At any time the proceedings committee would be in a position to make a reasonable and intelligent assessment of the amount of time which might properly be allotted in the parliamentary program for the specific stages of different bills before the house. Your committee recommends, where the proceedings committee would make a unanimous recommendation to the house as to the amount of time to be allotted to a particular stage of a particular measure that that recommendation would automatically become an order of the house. Knowing the specific amount of time which has been allotted to different stages of different measures the government leader, in consultation with his colleagues, the other house leaders, would be in a better position than at present to establish a reasonable timetable for calling the different stages of measures before the house.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Blair: I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that this is no time for hon. members to make remarks. There is no reason to expect that the