

*Procedure Committee Report*

these recommendations would have on parliament in the light of today's situation and parliament's difficulties, and so on.

The first thing that I think should be noticed is that throughout the country generally people are saying: What is wrong with parliament? Parliament's reputation has gone down. I think most of us are very concerned that people generally feel that something is very amiss with parliament. On the basis of the few years of experience I have had in the house I want to make the statement that I do not think there is anything very fundamentally wrong with parliament and its rules. I believe there is nothing substantially wrong with parliament that cannot be corrected by a change of government. That is the first and principal trouble with parliament today.

Certainly the way the government conducts its business and acts toward parliament has a great influence on the efficiency with which parliament can discharge its duties. I say now that the rules of parliament and our procedures are not too bad at all. What is wrong is the failure to use those procedures properly. It is the abuse of the rules and the abuse of the responsibility and power enjoyed by the government that have brought parliament into disrepute.

I do not think anybody will argue seriously that the leadership given by the government in the house does not have a substantial effect on how much work parliament can do. Anybody who looks at the record of leadership of the present government and says that we have been wasting time will find his answer just by looking at the Liberal record. It does not do us any good to start talking about committees and how much work they can do, if we do not keep in mind just what the faults are, how serious they are and how much of the difficulty has been caused by the failure of the rules to make adequate provision. No matter how well those rules permit the house to be governed, I say that when a government brings in a piece of legislation which has not been properly planned, does not present it properly, brings it in in the wrong way, and then has to withdraw it after a few days debate and reintroduce it in a different form, it is no wonder that parliament cannot get things done.

I suggest that members opposite, and the government, take a look at just how many times that sort of thing was done last year. How much of our time was spent in trying to get the government to do things properly? I remember what happened a year ago in connection with the moving of five branches

from agriculture to forestry by order in council. A few weeks later the order in council was cancelled. We could not even get information about what was going on and these branches did not know where they were at. The house wasted, if you want to call it that, weeks and weeks trying to get information out of the government, trying to find out from the government where the matter stood, trying to get the government to tell us what they were doing. I suggest it is this sort of thing that is wrong with parliament today. I suggest that if the government would stop doing what it did with the pension plan, bringing it in, withdrawing it and changing it every time we found something wrong with it, parliament would stop wasting time.

I do not think anybody is very happy that we are setting a world's record for the length of a parliamentary session, but I do resent the implication in the committee report that there is something fundamentally wrong with parliament. I say that parliament and its rules are a pretty good vehicle, but like any other vehicle it only operates properly if you have a driver behind the wheel. This government is supposed to be the operator of the vehicle of parliament. I think that nothing is more harmful to the house and does more harm to the Canadian people generally than the Liberal habit of making parliament the whipping boy for every mistake and blunder that the government makes. I would go a little further than simply saying that the problem is just lack of planning and leadership. There is also the question of the attitude that the government shows toward the house which is going to be reflected in the members to a certain extent and thus throughout the country. I suggest it is much more important that the people have confidence in our democratic institutions than in one particular party or one particular government. I suggest that this government is doing its best to make sure that our institutions are ruined, not that their reputation should be redeemed.

The contempt shown by the Prime Minister and ministers generally toward the house is responsible for the feeling of the people today that something is wrong with parliament. The refusal of cabinet ministers to give information to the house is what makes the house operate in a rather awkward and unwieldy fashion. I admit there is a further complication in the working of parliament these days. I do not think anyone imagined that we would have to put up with five parties instead of just two. I am sure we are all very much