

Another thing to which I want to address myself, and it relates to committees, is the election and the role of the chairpersons. I would refer to page 15 of the McGrath Report where there is a quotation of the Member for Skeena (Mr. Fulton), who said:

The power of committees should be increased dramatically with a view to several committees chaired by Opposition Members.

Now, the McGrath committee did not deal with this question of who will be chairing these committees. It is not in the Standing Orders, but to me again this is a fundamental element of reform. I have had casual discussions with the Hon. Member for St. John's East and I think I am not misunderstanding him in saying that he agreed with me that a good number of committees of this House should be chaired by Opposition Members. I think the figure that we talked about at the time was a proportional number of committees based on a proportion of seats that the Opposition has in this House. There are 70 opposition seats out of 282, so it would be normal that 25 per cent of the committees, beyond the traditional committees which are chaired by the Opposition, such as the Committee on Public Accounts, it would be appropriate that 25 per cent of the committees of this House be chaired by opposition Members. This is something again which is not in the rules, but it is something that I believe to be in the true spirit of reform. The committee chairmanships would be accorded to Government and to opposition Members based upon seniority, based upon knowledge of the subject matter, and then I think we can arrive at the kinds of committees that we all would like to have.

I also feel that the chairpersons of these committees should play a role similar to that of the chairpersons of the special committees or task forces that we have known in this House. In other words, the chairperson will not just be a traffic manager, an impartial observer who decides who questions next and who rules on points of order and so forth, but a person who will be taking an active part in questioning and, indeed, hopefully, will be trying to stimulate the kind of consensus and broad over-all approach that we feel should occur in these committees.

That leads me to the question of the problem of the legislative committees, which was previously referred to by the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans). We all feel that the standing committees should be developing expertise in their subject areas. Well, if this is the case and expertise is developed in the standing committees we may have a great proliferation of legislative committees where, for example, in the area of criminal law you may have three or four Bills. We have had three or four Bills dealing with various aspects of criminal law or justice before this House in the fall. The people on the standing committee cannot possibly man all of the legislative committees. You end up then with people on the legislative committees who have little or no understanding of the subject matter at issue, or certainly have not built up the expertise which the members of the standing committees have developed.

### *Standing Orders*

Therefore, it will be necessary to arrive at some kind of system whereby we will limit the number of legislative committees, and there are a number of models which have been referred to. The Hon. Member for Cochrane-Superior (Mr. Penner) referred to a traffic control system; so some sort of compromise or solution has to be found.

I would like to deal briefly with the committee on research, science and technology. I am the Liberal Opposition critic for science and technology. All I can say is that it is high time we had a committee of this nature. People in the universities across Canada, people in industry, the science community, for a long time have favoured the establishment of such a committee. I believe that science policies will have a fundamental impact on the future of the country. To my mind, science policies are related to industrial and social policies. They have broad ramifications. Technology is not limited to a small number of high-tech companies. It has applications in all sectors of the economy, including the resource, fishery, forestry, mining and agriculture sectors.

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The Government is not organized to focus on technology and how it affects all areas of our economy. Parliament has not been so organized up to now. I feel that one of the most important roles of this science committee will be to address technology with an intersectoral approach. It will be able to take a look at the interconnections between science and technology and the effects they have on many areas of the economy. This can only be done in a committee of this nature. I know that I am not alone in being delighted to see the creation of this committee.

Adequate resources for the committee are required. Again, I have been told that some Members of Parliament have in the past been reluctant to set up a science committee because they felt that they would not necessarily have the knowledge and expertise to deal with such a complex issue. I know there will be a system for establishing budgets. Perhaps I am already putting in first dibs on those budgets. Certainly this is the area in which the most research resources will be required if we are to have an effective committee.

I would also like to deal with the human rights committee. As the Government's motion is presently drafted, the human rights committee seems to be mandated to deal only with the reports of the Canadian Human Rights Commission. There are many Members of Parliament who are concerned with human rights not only at home but abroad. It is my hope that this committee will be able to cover the Canadian participation in international human rights affairs and will be able to deal with questions like the Helsinki Final Accord, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. I hope that it will deal with the United Nations and its Commission on Human Rights and that it will be able to interact with various interest groups rights across Canada that are concerned with the question of human rights not only in Canada but on an international level. This would add a great deal to the workings of the House, because in the past several years we have