

Opposition and the leader of the New Democratic Party indicated that if the government chose to make a reference of an agreeable form, which could be discussed by House leaders, on the question of parliamentary reform and renewal of the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization, it would be done without a long debate. This was not a representation by House leaders but by party leaders; I repeat that to my hon. friend.

There are reports extant—the last one was 1976—which could be part of a reference. There is the position paper which was filed by me; however, my friend described it as incomplete. There may be other proposals which my hon. friend could bring together, but the point is that in two years the committee has not met and it is not yet even organized. Would the government House leader not consider arranging next week, while these discussions are continuing, the organization of the committee so that its membership can be confirmed and the members themselves can begin to think about the process? It is inevitable that it should be done. It is in the best interests of Parliament that movement be made very, very quickly. I put that to the government House leader in a firm but kind way, hoping that the answer will be in the affirmative.

Mr. Pinard: Madam Speaker, the hon. member mentioned that the committee has not sat for two years.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): It has not been organized.

Mr. Pinard: The organization of the committee would require only a few hours; that is not the problem.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Let us get on with it.

Mr. Pinard: The decision must be made on whether it will be the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization. It all depends on what kind of good faith will be shown toward the non-controversial changes which will be implemented in the short term. If we choose the route of an independent committee composed of former Members of Parliament—

Mr. Huntington: Ridiculous.

Mr. Pinard: This decision has not been made. My hon. colleague referred me to part of the speech made yesterday by his leader. I refer him to part of my speech yesterday on the same subject. If last year my hon. colleague was expecting us to organize a committee to look into parliamentary reform while his party was hijacking Parliament during the constitutional debate, I think he was being unrealistic. He was not realistic, either, when he talked about organizing such a committee last fall while they were crying for us to deal with the budget and the economy. But we started the process immediately after the Christmas adjournment; it is ongoing. I think it is about time there were signs of good faith, and quite frankly I expect that those signs will be shown very shortly.

In conclusion, let me remind the hon. member that we had a very serious and important experience last year when we put some six to seven parliamentary task forces into effect. They

did a very good job. They had the participation of hon. members from all regions of the country and on both sides of the House. They reported with very reasonable deadlines on major issues in the country. This experiment of the Liberal government could be used for improving the rules in the future.

Mr. Nowlan: You do not improve the rules unless you improve the tone or the temper of this place.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Madam Speaker, I will not respond to that. I am interested in making the observation that perhaps it is the best indication of the necessity of getting down to the business of looking at the House of Commons. I ask my hon. friend whether or not proposals have been put to the government with respect to parliamentary reform. If so, when were they put? Have they been accepted as yet and, if not, is the government intending to table those proposals at some time within a reasonable period of time?

Mr. Pinard: Madam Speaker, in so far as we are concerned, it is very clear that parliamentary reform is most important. My colleague is asking questions on how it will be done and when it will be done. I think I answered those questions very clearly in my speech yesterday; I made very constructive and precise suggestions. Therefore, all he has to do is read my speech and listen to the answers I have given today. He will realize that we are very serious and that all we want is for the opposition to show some good faith; then we will achieve parliamentary reform much faster than if it plays political games.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

PETITION

MR. COOK—RECONSIDERATION OF BUDGET AND HIGH INTEREST RATE POLICY

Mr. Chuck Cook (North Vancouver-Burnaby): Madam Speaker, as a member of the House, it is my duty to present a petition on behalf of the members of the North Vancouver Chamber of Commerce. The purpose of the petition signed by 114 concerned chamber members is to indicate to the government that the highly regressive effects of the November 12 budget, combined with the government's stubborn adherence to its high interest rate policy, are forcing a housing crisis in the Vancouver lower mainland.

The nature of the petition is to demand that the government reconsider its budget and its high interest rate policy, in order to remedy the zero vacancy rate and minimal housing construction in the Vancouver lower mainland. The petitioners hope that, in Madam Speaker's examination of the petition, you find the petition in order, sense the urgency and desperation of their plea, and use the discretionary power vested in