

Tax Reform

make it possible for members of the committee, if they wish, to ask the present chairman of the finance committee to act as the House of Commons chairman of the joint committee.

I believe it is the intention of various groups in the house to give their members on our finance committee the opportunity to serve on this joint committee on tax reforms. The provisions of this motion about the use of quorums are in effect identical with the wording of our standing orders on the use of quorums by standing committees. The motion is designed to ensure that the special joint committee will follow the same provisions on this as are presently followed by our standing committees.

The next paragraph deals with the right of someone who is not a member of the committee to participate in its public proceedings. This again is taken from our standing orders and is designed to give members of either house, who want to do so but who are not members of the committee, the same opportunity that is given in our standing orders with respect to participation in the work of standing committees.

There is also a provision in the motion which will authorize the committee to retain expert, technical and secretarial assistance. I think the need for this is self-evident. By putting this provision in this particular motion we will make it unnecessary for the committee to come back to this house at a later date to ask for this authority.

To conclude, let me say that this motion asks this house to unite with the other place to create a special joint committee of the Senate and the House of Commons to be known as the Special Joint Parliamentary Committee on Tax Reform. The wording dealing with the participation of members of the house has been modified from the wording of the motion originally presented several weeks ago. This is the result of consultation with members on all sides of this house. The creation of a joint committee of the house and the other place I think it can be argued, will bring about a measure of convenience for the public. All those who are interested in presenting briefs on the government's initial proposals on tax reform will not have to do so twice—once in the house and again in the Senate. They will make only one appearance before this joint committee.

I certainly commend to the favourable consideration of the house, this motion to set up this joint committee. By accepting this motion we will be empowering it to sit although the

[Mr. Gray.]

house itself may not be sitting until some time in the fall. If that should turn out to be the case at least some necessary preparatory work could be carried out thereby enabling us to begin, all the more quickly, the study we all agree should be given to the forthcoming proposals of the government on tax reform.

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Gray) for his explanation of the motion before the house. In respect of the point of order I raised I should like to say there is another point I might have raised in relation to the events and circumstances surrounding a potential white paper on this subject.

It is quite conceivable that this house will be prorogued and reassembled before the white paper is presented. Any question of the committee considering the white paper after it has been considered in the house in proper order is merely academic at this time.

This matter of tax reform has been with us now for seven years. If my memory serves me correctly a commission was appointed in 1962, the report of which was tabled by today's Acting Prime Minister (Mr. Sharp), on February 24, 1967. Like a knight in shining white armor he proudly, and with a degree of what he felt was self-satisfaction, promised us a white paper for January, 1968—

Mr. Stanfield: He was held up by parliament.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West):—not withstanding that fact a number of members, particularly those to my left, thought the minister should be prepared to implement some of these provisions by June of 1967. We have now reached July of 1969 and there is no sign of this white paper. All we had this morning was an indication that this famous white paper was being written.

There are original drafts and original drafts. The paper may be written but I do not know through what maze of government our committees may have to circumnavigate, or attempt to wiggle through, before the government will dare let us and the public proceed to examine its ideas, not only on tax reform but on other measures. This is the thing I find extraordinary. There was never any indication in 1967 about the presentation of this limited report.

I do not know how many times the then minister of finance said the white paper on tax reform was being prepared. On many