

Procedure and Organization

pointed, and that standing order No. 5 be amended by the addition of the words "and its committees" after the word "house" where this occurs. At present members are required to attend the sessions of the house, but when a session stands adjourned their attendance is not obligatory. We think this obligation should be invoked also with regard to attendance at committees.

In paragraph 28 we recommend that the main estimates of expenditure should automatically be referred to the appropriate standing committees when they are tabled in the house.

Paragraph 29 recommends that there be no more than 20 days set aside for debating the main estimates in committee of the whole. We think the details of all the expenditures would be delved into deeply in the committees, and that a maximum of 20 days is sufficient for debating them in the house. This would, of course, prevent interminable repetition of the debate which took place in any committee.

Paragraph 30 contains a very important point that requires some explanation, because it deals with the six supply motions that are required under the present standing orders. At present these six supply motions are required in order to refer estimates to the committee of the whole, but if all the estimates when they are tabled automatically stand referred to the appropriate committees, it would appear there would no longer be any need for these six supply motions.

At the same time we recognize that there ought to be a number of debates during the course of a session on which the opposition would have the right to select the subject matter and move motions of no confidence if they wished to do so. Though we have not provided for what should be done to retain this right of the opposition we do not believe these opportunities should be abolished, even though they would not be required to enter estimates. We recognize that additional study needs to be done to provide for retaining this procedure and at the same time tidying it up so that it will not necessarily be called a supply motion.

There are a number of other suggestions, such as that these supply motions would still be required in order to vote the funds when the report of an estimates committee came back to the house and, as I pointed out, there was no intention on the part of the subcommittee to do away with such opportunities because it is necessary that the opposition

select the subject matter of a limited debate. One other consideration which is not contained in the report is that possibly the first two days, the Monday and Tuesday after the house reconvenes following an adjournment period, would be an opportune time for the presenting of motions of no confidence.

Paragraph 31 simply exempts the Speaker's estimates, the Governor General's estimates and the privy council estimates from going to the standing committees, because we think these are of unique importance to members in the chamber and therefore should be considered in committee of the whole.

At present I am not going to go into a lot more detail, but I think members of the house should know these things and the considerations which gave rise to the recommendations.

Taking all the recommendations that are in the fifteenth report and putting them together with the recommendations made in the eleventh report, which dealt with the matter of committees being set up at the beginning of each session, in our opinion they will make a tremendous improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of parliament.

I should now like to read excerpts from two or three press reports which appeared since the committee's report was tabled last Monday, in order to indicate that there appears to be almost unanimous support in editorial comment across the country for the recommendations of the committee. For example, the *Montreal Star* on December 16 said:

Where there has been failure it has often lain in outmoded procedure and rules rather than individuals. These rules have been under scrutiny for many months. An all-party committee of the house has worked with astonishing unanimity to change and streamline procedures.

The *Ottawa Citizen* on December 16 said:

The best thing about the report is that it proposes a thorough and rational study of government estimates, thus suggesting a more effective check on spending while restoring to the private member his ancient control over the public money. A job that needs to be done would be given to a group of people—the backbenchers of all parties....

The *Toronto Telegram* of December 16 said:

This week the Commons committee on procedure and organization made some recommendations which give hope for a revival of respect among the people's elected representatives. This is indispensable, for without it the nation's respect for parliament cannot easily be nursed back to health.