

*Government Organization*

that the committee meet, even if the concurrence of the government of the day is not given to such a meeting.

**Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale):** Mr. Chairman, perhaps I could set the hon. member straight on the business of standing committees. By Standing Order 65, concurred in earlier in this session we did set up a Standing Committee on Regional Development. I also suggest that the hon. member might look at some of the other changes that we made in the rules on December 20 last.

He would then find that his assertion is mistaken that the government can prevent the committee meeting and considering estimates. The government has no choice over whether estimates are referred to a standing committee. It is under an obligation to refer estimates and each year, until the rules may be changed by the house, the estimates will automatically be referred, and the opportunity will exist for the committee to meet and to consider the particular questions that may be of relevance to it.

May I make another point with respect to the observation of the hon. member about putting into legislation essentially matters which surely should be the prerogative of the House of Commons only. The procedure of the house is determined by the house itself. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre very often says that the rules here should be determined by parliament, but he does not really mean that because parliament means the Senate, the House of Commons and the Queen. I do not think that we, under this legislation, or under any other legislation—

**Mr. Peters:** Do you want this by eleven o'clock?

**Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale):** My friend, we will have it by eleven o'clock and not even you will be able to prevent it. There was an order to that effect earlier today. May I also point out to the hon. member for Egmont that if we fall into the practice of putting this kind of amendment into statutes, then anytime we in the House of Commons wanted to change our rules in the house with respect to the manner in which we handle our business, the type of committee that we have, or the process of legislation, we would have to ask the permission of the Senate, and the Queen to do so. I think it is appropriate and reasonable to make procedural changes with respect to the business of the house within the context of the standing orders, and not to shackle the house's right to deal with its own

procedures by including procedural limitations in statutes.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Chairman, a few minutes ago I was prepared to get up and say that even though it hurt me to do so I had to support the position taken by the Minister of Forestry and Rural Development. I hope that his case has not been spoiled by the intervention of the President of the Privy Council, but as a matter of fact I am afraid he has provoked my hon. friend from Timiskaming to keep this going until eleven o'clock. I had hoped we would finish it by 10.30.

If I may revert to the case made by the Minister of Forestry and Rural Development, I suggest that it is an unwise policy to write rules for this House of Commons into statutes. I think we should make our own rules. I believe we have made some improvements, and things are getting along reasonably well.

I also ask the hon. member for Egmont, even if his amendment were to carry, where would he be? All he would have is a requirement that a committee be constituted, that its chairman be a member of the opposition, and that the report be referred thereto—period.

There is no requirement in this amendment that the report be dealt with, that there be a report back to the house, and that it be dealt with here. Maybe I have saved my hon. friend from Timiskaming the trouble of making the speech that is probably up his sleeve, but may I point out that a more serious problem which faces us is what we do with the reports of committees. We have too many committees that meet—not the ones on estimates and bills—but on investigations and so on, and they report back to the house, and those reports do not get dealt with. In any case, I think it would be a mistake to write into our statutes, which have to go to the other place, the rules under which we carry on our proceedings in this house.

I think it would be better to leave it to the house to exercise its responsibility over this department by seeing that when the estimates of the department are referred to the committee, as they must be, all its operations are thoroughly scrutinized.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. MacDonald (Egmont):** Mr. Chairman, having listened to these two house leaders, both somewhat recognized with regard to