

*Supply*

Privy Council (Mr. Smith) is a member. I think he will agree with most of the things I am going to say. The Special Committee on Standing Orders and Procedure was struck and had its first meeting on June 22, 1982, just about a year ago. Since that time we have had 62 meetings. We have heard from 42 witnesses. We have travelled to Westminster where we saw firsthand how the mother of Parliament works. It seems to work very efficiently. We travelled to Washington and studied the U.S. committee system. We have heard all the expert witnesses, the so-called expert witnesses and the scholars with respect to Parliament. We have made reports to the House. We are now operating under provisional Standing Orders as a result of our third report.

This, I believe, has brought debate back into the House. Before that debates were becoming structured and stunted. We had procedures which really could not in any way be described as debate. We had set speeches. But now at least there is an element of debate. If a Member speaks for 20 minutes, that Member knows he or she is to be accountable to the House for what has been said. For a period of ten minutes that Member can be cross-examined by the House. Comments can be made on statements in the speech. I think it is a marvellous innovation. If the committee accomplishes nothing else except that, it will have been well worth the exercise. Our innovation has been admired by other Parliaments. I suspect we will see other Parliaments adopting the procedure before too long.

Of course, we are all aware of the change in Parliament's sitting hours. I will not go into that except to suggest to those who are skeptical about giving up evening sittings that they take a look at other Parliaments. The U.S. Congress does not sit at night, for example. I say to the President of the Privy Council that by giving up evening sittings I believe this Chamber has become a little more efficient in terms of debate. I do not believe that evening sittings, quite frankly, were all that productive, not that these morning sittings are more productive. I believe they are.

**Mr. Pinard:** Yes, they are.

**Mr. McGrath:** Certainly they could be more productive.

**Mr. Pinard:** What about Wednesdays?

**Mr. McGrath:** The President of the Privy Council asks about Wednesdays. We attempted to elevate Private Members' Business in this place to give it some importance in the parliamentary calendar. I believe our work is incomplete in that regard. We have taken three hours, which would normally be from five to six three days a week, and lumped them together on a Wednesday afternoon. I believe we have to go a step further. Private Members' Business has to become more a part of the business of this House, and in so doing there has to be proper planning. There has to be adequate notice given in the House as to which Bills are coming forward. The Government has to be disposed on certain Bills to allow them to come to a vote and not to get into a situation where the order is discharged and the subject matter referred to a committee, but where there can be a vote on a Private Members' Bill and it

has some chance of emerging as statute law. That is the next stage in elevating the role of the Private Member in this House.

The third report of the Special Committee on Standing Orders and Procedure is the substantive report, the first two reports being perfunctory. We are now operating under the third report until the end of the year. What about the fourth report? It deals with the Speakership. I believe the House should debate the Speakership, the role of the Speaker and how the House goes about electing a Speaker. I think we can do that without making any inferences or reflecting in any way upon the present distinguished incumbent of the Chair or yourself, Mr. Speaker, as Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not think you would be sensitive to a debate like that. I do not think Madam Speaker would be sensitive to that kind of debate. For the life of me I do not understand why we have not moved on the fourth report.

• (1250)

More important, what about the fifth report? I believe it to be a very important report because it deals with the new committee structure whereby standing committees are now reduced to a membership of ten. The recommendation of the Special Committee was not less than ten and not more than 15. By the way, no one envisaged that the Government would take the minimum and use it as the norm. That was not the intent at all. As a result of ten-member standing committees, it means that the Official Opposition only has three Members on a particular committee. Under the present system we have to consider the chairman of the committee as being one of the Government supporters on the committee. That is another question which is dealt with in the sixth report.

The fifth report has not been concurred in. It makes provision whereby it would be necessary under the rules for the Clerk to convene a meeting of all standing committees within ten days of Parliament sitting, so that they can get on with electing chairmen, vice-chairmen and get off the ground. That, on the basis of it, may not seem very important but let me give an example of the kind of abuse it was designed to correct.

The Standing Committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration did not meet this year until April 19. That Committee has the responsibility of dealing with the estimates of the Department of Labour, of the Department of Manpower and Immigration and of the Unemployment Insurance Commission. For one reason or another—and the Government may or may not have good reasons—that Committee was not struck. It did not hold its organizational meeting until April 19, notwithstanding the fact that on May 30 all estimates are deemed to have been reported back to the House. Other committees were well under way by April 19, but that Committee had not even met. That should not be allowed to happen, but it can and will happen again unless the Government acts on the recommendations of the fifth report. We are waiting for the Government to stand and move concurrence or