

*Procedure Committee Report*

rants are methods which can be and often have been used so as to avoid that complete and detailed study which this house should give to financial estimates and spending. The establishment of great crown corporations which in effect and for all practical purposes operate outside the area of influence of parliament further complicates the examination of government spending. The method of providing loans to these government creations is another weapon which frequently removes the expenditure of millions of dollars far beyond the practical authority of parliament. Finally, the fact that we are continuing to use the committee of supply as virtually the only way by which we examine the estimates means it is almost impossible for the legislative branch to fulfil its real duty in this important area.

The way in which the committee of supply operates is common knowledge. The minister has his officials in front of him at a time when it is essential that members of this house honestly concerned with the critical examination and analysis of these expenditures should be able to direct questions not through the minister in accordance with the clumsy practice followed at this time, but by direct confrontation between them and the officials of the department. There is no way by which this can be secured other than by the proposals contained in this report for the establishment of standing committees on estimates.

We had some experience in this field in 1958 and 1959, when under the government of my right hon. friend the Leader of the Opposition we established a standing committee on estimates under the chairmanship of a talented and able member of parliament, the former member for Calgary South. Under his chairmanship this committee operated well and effectively for several years. Here we had this direct confrontation which I submit is a condition precedent to our being able to do the job which is entrusted to us. This committee examined the estimates of several departments. Its members were able to put piercing and direct questions to the officials concerned, as a result of which they made recommendations to the departments which were implemented by changes in policy. All in all, I suggest this is an excellent example of the kind of thing which I think will emerge if these recommendations are accepted.

I admit that as far as the airing of grievances is concerned and the discussion of the shortcomings of the government, the commit-

tee of supply as it now functions is capable of doing the job. But to the extent to which we have this other responsibility—and it is becoming an increasingly great responsibility—I submit that the committee of supply is altogether obsolete in permitting us to fulfil our duty.

I suggest, sir, there is not any doubt that this parliament in this country is undertaking and will undertake in the future very great social programs involving the transfer of funds and leading to significant changes in our society. In other words the government is going to take money from some people and, directly or indirectly, pay it to others. In my belief the people involved in these programs, the people we represent, are entitled to the most scrupulous and careful examination by their elected representatives to see that the programs are working as they are intended to work, to see that they are conducted in a proper, expeditious and economic way. I feel this cannot be done by the committee of supply, and that only through the intervention of standing committees on estimates as proposed in this fifteenth report can we achieve this objective.

Now then, we have the question of the actual legislating itself. We will always have in the house, I hope, the great debates on principle on second reading. However, I am convinced that we can have a far more careful and useful study of the actual, detailed proposals in the standing committees. As a matter of fact I should like to see us go a step further and make it mandatory for certain types of legislation to be referred to the standing committees. Perhaps we could even go a step further than that, Mr. Speaker, and in many cases have measures referred to standing committees before second reading.

We have had some experience with this procedure. Last session a bill was introduced dealing with the division of the Northwest Territories. Hon. members on this side took exception to it. As the result of a fairly stiff and protracted fight we were able to persuade the government that the subject matter of the bill should be referred to a standing committee. As a result of the careful study the bill then received it was decided not to proceed with the bill.

I attempted the same thing this year in connection with legislation introduced by the Minister of Agriculture in relation to the farm syndicate measure. This was refused by Your Honour and your ruling was upheld by the house. I have noticed since then that a