

*Supply*

a worth-while way. People do not believe it. They watch Question Period and think that is all that occurs. They never watch debates in the House of Commons. They never see a committee operating. They had one good occasion to do that during the constitutional committee hearings in the course of this Parliament, but normally they never see it. When you tell them there are standing committees and Members labouring day and night, week after week, on the standing committees, they do not believe it at all because they do not see it on television. It is my hope that sometime, without destroying the committee system, there will be opportunities for the committee meetings to be televised. I hope that will be the case.

I was truly astounded at the results of the work of the subcommittee of the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs under the chairmanship of the Hon. Member for Windsor-Walkerville (Mr. MacGuigan), who is now the Attorney General and the Minister of Justice, with respect to prison reform. As a result of the non-partisan "seek the truth" approach that subcommittee took, there is a process in place in the Department concerning prison reform. All the special committees have worked well, with the objective being to seek the truth and make the best recommendation. Those special committees were established under this Government and were foreseen by our Government with our select committees on volunteerism and a host of other subjects.

• (1600)

Today I asked a very serious question of the Solicitor General (Mr. Kaplan) in the House of Commons with respect to the security legislation in the House. There is a great deal of controversy in Canada over the Government's proposal with regard to the new security service. There are problems within the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. There are problems within the House of Commons. I say to the Government of the day, as I would say to any Government of the day, that among the private members of this House of Commons, the ones who do not hold office, those who are not House Leaders, Cabinet Ministers, Parliamentary Secretaries or Speakers, there is a great deal of expertise. There are numbers of inquiring minds and there is an ability to work hard.

Today I suggested very seriously, and the Solicitor General seemed to take kindly to the suggestion, that perhaps it would be appropriate if the subject matter of the Bill, which I believe is Bill C-157, were sent to a special committee of the House of Commons. There should be a simple reference of the Bill to the committee, having attached to the reference the actual text of the Bill itself. That committee, whatever it is, should be given a specific time within which to report, a reasonable time not a long time so that those who are interested in it could be heard.

Does Your Honour remember that the last time that was done concerning a major piece of legislation it was with regard to the immigration Bill, before 1979? That was a controversial piece of legislation, legislation so fundamental that it had the potential to change the complexion of the country. My friend, the Hon. Member for Sarnia-Lambton (Mr. Cullen), was the Minister at that time, I believe. What occurred was that the Government of the day was wise enough, smart enough and, I

guess, even political enough to recognize the problems. There was a special joint committee which went across the country and spoke to the interest groups, allowing the public to be heard and submissions to be made to Parliament before the Government had taken a hard and fast position, as it invariably does on second reading under our rules, which are silly from time to time. They are positions which cannot be changed. The results and report of the committee went to the Department. The Bill was vastly rewritten. It followed many of the recommendations from Members of Parliament.

If Your Honour will recall, the second reading debate on that fundamental position, that fundamental piece of legislation, did not amount to 10 days or two weeks and the bells were not rung. It was not a case of the Government trying to shove a piece of legislation down Parliament's throat, as it is trying to do with regard to the Crow rate. It was not a case similar to the omnibus Bill. It was a sensible seeking for the truth by a parliamentary committee, with the result that truth was found and considered. As a result of the process involving what started off as being a very controversial Bill, it took only four days to complete the second reading debate. There were some amendments later on. However, to my mind, that was a sensible operation within the parliamentary system.

It is amazing how the task forces have worked within this Parliament, when Members of Parliament have been asked to concentrate together on a particular matter and to seek the truth. Members of Parliament are capable of some great things. This is an opportunity for the Solicitor General, his colleagues and the Government to emulate a process which had worked before. I hope they will consider it.

I do not speak in any partisan terms with respect to this motion. Our process with respect to motions requires them to be dealt with in partisan terms. One motion may be less partisan and another one more partisan. However, that is the kind of process we have in this House. That is why it must be reformed and changed.

I say to Your Honour that I worry about what the well-meaning, well-intentioned democracy thinks of Parliament. I am worried about the regard for Parliament in the Privy Council Office from time to time. Why should I not worry? I have been reading a report which appeared in the *Vancouver Sun* by Mr. Jamie Lamb of Ottawa. There is a requirement for Crown agencies and corporations to file annual reports and to file them within a certain period of time. The Canada Post Corporation has not filed its annual report and financial statements within three months of the end of its fiscal year. It is not the only offender. The column states that according to the latest report by the Auditor General, not a single Crown agency filed its report within a three-month period after the end of its fiscal year, not one.

Every Member of Parliament, including Your Honour, and every person who cares about this place must be concerned about that kind of regard for the law which is passed here. That is the purpose of this motion. That is why I believe that