of the Representation Commissioner Act required under section 22 of that Act.

The hon. member for the Yukon has suggested that the Dominion Controverted Elections Act should be considered by the standing committee. I believe that to be a good suggestion and I am prepared to make an appropriate motion. However I should hope that the committee could deal with this act in a way which would not delay its work on the other business referred to it.

I would propose therefore that an appropriate order to this effect be discussed during the recess with the house leaders of the various parties, and that upon our return after the Easter adjournment we should make an order of reference along the lines of the timetable I have indicated, so that the Committee on Privileges and Elections may consider these various matters.

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I think it will be agreed throughout the house that this is a very important subject matter and one upon which action should be taken as early as possible by way of consideration, since it relates of course to the very foundation of our democracy. I certainly accept the suggestion, as I am sure will all hon. members, that the matters referred to should be referred to the committee as soon as possible after we return following the Easter recess. The suggestion which the minister has made with respect to the order of priorities appears to me to be reasonable, with this qualification—I doubt whether these matters can be treated in quite such watertight compartments as he seems to envisage. In other words, I doubt whether the committee can adequately consider these matters in a vacuum.

I would suggest that the possible necessity of considering the inter-relation of these various aspects, of our election procedures ought to be given further consideration before any attempt is made to place before the house a resolution which might unnecessarily tie the hands of the committee in an unfortunate way. I believe this matter should be considered very seriously. There can be no question that the subject matter to be discussed is going to take a lot of time and a lot of consideration. The report of the committee established to deal with election expenses and the reports of provincial committees which have been received or published since the report of the committee appointed by this house will require very careful consideration. These are matters which will occupy the full attention of members of the house.

[Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale).]

I hope every effort will be made to permit as full and free a consideration of these matters as possible and, if I may say so without offence, that the government will not attempt to control the thought of the house or the committee in any way by the adoption of preconceived ideas as to what kind of reforms should or should not be undertaken. I certainly agree that the question should be proceeded with promptly, but I do caution the house about assuming too easily that these questions can all be fitted into isolated compartments, as the President of the Privy Council has indicated.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): We appreciate the fact that the President of the Privy Council has outlined his thinking with regard to the important matters which relate to our election machinery. I may say to him that we will be quite prepared to participate in discussions during the Easter recess as to any order of reference which might be made when we come back on April 14.

There are however one or two things which I think should be said at this time. I am glad the President of the Privy Council, although he said the new machinery should be ready within two years from now, thought it really ought to be ready before that time. Two years from now could be too late; even majority governments have been known to fall apart. If we are to have the machinery ready for the next election I would say it should be ready by the end of 1970. If this kind of timetable has merit, I suggest too much is being put on the platter of the Committee on Privileges and Elections. I should like to propose that the whole question of election expenses, namely a study of a report of the committee on that subject and any legislation to be based thereon, ought to be referred to a separate committee, even to a special committee.

I do not blame the President of the Privy Council for the order of priorities he has outlined, first, election lists; second, other details; third, election expenses and, finally, the Representation Commissioner Act. However, I am afraid that under this kind of timetable any action on the question of election expenses will get lost in the shuffle. We went through all this in the last parliament. We pressed for something to be done on this question and we were assured that something would be done until, finally, we were informed it was too late. I can see something like that happening again.

We agree that the machinery for drawing up the lists and so on is very important, but