

*Government Orders*

I, for one, am totally negative to the legislative committee and the standing committee. I think this is a duplication if ever, that puts more strain on government members. From the hon. member's practical experience, how does he assess the legislative committee and the necessity of it with a viable standing committee?

• (1640 )

**Mr. Blaikie:** Mr. Speaker, I tried to answer that by saying that my understanding of the McGrath committee recommendations was that if legislative committees were to concern themselves only and strictly with technical matters, this was to be part of an over-all package whereby certain policy principles or whatever would find the opportunity to be examined in other ways. That has happened. Standing committees have looked at things and then when a bill has finally appeared it has gone to a legislative committee, but it has also happened without that.

The concern is that the government will simply bring in a bill, the subject matter of which has not been previously studied by a standing committee, put it into the legislative committee and say "I am sorry, according to the rules we can only hear technical comments" and, bingo, the process is incomplete in that way and expedited in a way that we find offensive.

In all honesty I have to say that I do not have a great deal of experience on legislative committees because it just so happens that given my critic areas I have not sat on a lot of legislative committees. I was the external affairs critic for three years. There is not a lot of legislation in external affairs. Prior to that I was the environment critic. Just as the environmental legislation came along in the fall of 1987, I went to external affairs. I do not profess to have a lot of experience on legislative committees, but my sense from a distance is they have not worked out as well as we thought they would when we conceived them.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** /I regret that questions and comments are now terminated.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to a government motion which, if it is ever passed, will have a negative impact on future debates in this House.

I would like to begin by saying that the abuse of the Standing Orders of the House of Commons by this government is nothing new. We, opposition members, are used to the government abusing the rules.

The government claims that the proposed changes will make the proceedings more relevant and increase the efficiency of the House. First of all, we must realize that this is being proposed by the very government that applied closure 13 times and time allocation to important bills over eight times since 1988. How can we seriously take a proposal to improve the efficiency of the House made by a government which, in the past, showed contempt for the Standing Orders of this House? The figures regarding the number of times closure was applied clearly illustrate this point.

Of more concern is the fact that the proposed changes are contrary to the fundamental principles of the British parliamentary system that we follow. I would like to quote a short paragraph from the *Précis of Procedure*, third edition to show how such proposals run counter to the principles of our parliamentary system. The first paragraph of section 13(A) reads as follows:

A fundamental aspect of the principles on which the financial procedures of Parliament are based is that Parliament does not grant supply before the Opposition has had the opportunity to show why it should be refused.

Mr. Speaker, to show the Canadian people why supply should be granted or not, the Opposition has at its disposal days called "opposition days" or "allotted days". On these 25 days a year, the Opposition can show the Canadian people how the government is spending their money. But it is now proposed to considerably reduce the number of opposition days. Fewer opposition days would mean fewer opportunities for the Opposition to question the government actions and spending.

The role of an opposition party in a parliamentary system is to make the process more democratic by forcing the government of the day to be accountable.