

Tax Reform

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order which I believe may be helpful. In following the text read by the parliamentary secretary it has occurred to me that perhaps there is an inadvertent omission in the first paragraph which reads that the committee may sit during the sittings and adjournments of this house. This implies that it could not carry on following the period of prorogation. This being a special joint committee I do not believe it will be appointed only for the life of parliament, as is the case with the standing and joint committees of the house. There might be a procedural difficulty there in that the committee may do a considerable amount of work before the prorogation of the present session, whenever that may occur, which would be lost following the prorogation of the session and would have to be repeated in the next session. Perhaps this might be cured by the addition of the words "during the sittings and adjournments of the house and periods of prorogation".

Mr. Gray: Mr. Speaker, I should like to thank the hon. member for bringing this to my attention. I think he has a valid point. I think that what we should want to do is not only to enable the committee to sit during any period when there may be a hiatus following the prorogation of one session and the beginning of another but also to enable it to be in the same situation as are the standing committees which carry on during the life of parliament. Perhaps in the course of our remarks on this I may, with the assistance of the table, draft appropriate wording and, with the unanimous consent of the house, add that wording to the motion because, as I said, I think my hon. friend has in fact made a most useful and valuable contribution.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): May I ask, Mr. Speaker, whether, if the wording is changed, their Honours in the other place will be called back to change their part of the motion?

Mr. Winch: If I am wrong, I apologize, but my understanding of what we have just heard is that this committee will be able to sit during the summer recess, if we ever have one. I understand that the other house has adjourned until October 14.

Mr. Gray: I am informed that the motion for adjournment of the other place is such that it can be called back on a 24 hour notice, and I have been informed that it would be

possible for this to be done, if it were necessary, to ensure that this particular motion be in the form most conducive to carrying out the aims sought for it. I think that the hon. member for Vancouver East (Mr. Winch) has also raised a good point, that is that the change which the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) mentioned may in fact require the concurrence of the other place to modify their own motion. As far as I am concerned I would have no hesitation in asking, through the proper channels, that the Senate be asked to come back to carry on such work as may be necessary for this purpose.

● (2:10 p.m.)

While some thought is being given to the proper wording which will enable the committee to carry on beyond any prorogation of this present session, perhaps I can say that the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Macdonald) attempted several weeks ago to obtain leave of the house to move the motion to set up a special joint committee of the house and the other place to deal with matters of tax reform. When unanimous consent was not obtained there occurred a period of consultation not only with spokesmen of the opposition parties but also with members on this side of the house. This resulted in the form of the motion being changed substantially, such that it now reads in the way I have just stated.

If I am not misinformed, and I do not think I am, it is fair to say that the provisions of the motion, at least with respect to the participation of members of the House of Commons, reflects the consultations that have taken place with members on both sides of the house. Let me review these provisions briefly.

I think the most significant is the one calling for the appointment or designation of 20 members of this house to make up the House of Commons component, if I may call it that, of the special joint committee. You will recall that the original motion called for the appointment of only 12 members.

Having 20 members from the House of Commons on this special joint committee will, of course, mean a widening of the opportunity for participation of members of this house in the discussions on this important matter. The practical effect will be that members of the finance committee of this house will be in a position to act on behalf of their respective parties on this joint committee. Also this will