

*Procedure and Organization*

the committees branch of the House of Commons must become the subject matter of a thorough investigation to make sure first of all that they are able to cope with the provision of rooms, staff, and all the other facilities these committees will need. I might say at this point that some members of the sub-committee felt that consideration of the estimates should have been consolidated even more so far as the number of committees is concerned. We are down to nine committees, but some of us felt that the number should be reduced to six because of the physical limitations involved in having six committees meeting simultaneously.

There is the matter of reporters in both English and French, the question of simultaneous translation and all the other facilities these committees will require. Having in mind the overriding consideration that we wanted to have the estimates referred to committees, we had to try to reach some kind of compromise so that in fact the committees could meet and be properly staffed. There is also the problem of having the committee proceedings printed and available to members. Therefore it seems to me we have to recognize that there are physical limitations.

We think that at the present time it would be difficult for more than three or four committees to meet simultaneously, but during those periods when the house would stand adjourned there would be additional staff who would be released from their reporting and translating duties in the House of Commons who would be available to the committees branch. Therefore it would perhaps be possible for four or five committees to meet at the same time and still do all those things that are necessary.

With regard to joint committees, members are well aware that at the present time there are several joint committees with the other place which primarily consider shared services such as the restaurant, library and so on. We believe that one joint committee could deal with all of these shared services. We also recommend, of course, another joint committee on statute law review and consolidation, which is a new departure. I am not going to take the time today to explain that particular committee. I want to go through the report very quickly.

We recommend that the size of committees be reduced substantially. In fact your committee recommends that no standing committee shall consist of less than 15 or more than 30 members. Members will be aware, of course, that at the present time some of the

standing committees have as many as 60 members. We recommend that the quorum of all these committees shall be a majority of the membership. In other words, for a committee of 30 members the quorum would be 16, and for a committee with 15 members it would be eight.

We also recommend that at the outset, when the committees are struck and the membership is named, there should be alternate members named so that we would not have to come back to the house repeatedly for the substitution of names. Therefore if any member who is assigned to a committee is unable to attend it would be his responsibility to get in touch with his alternate to see that he should attend.

We also recommend that a chairmen's panel be set up consisting of the Deputy Speaker of the house as chairman and the chairmen of all the other standing committees as members. The purpose of this is so there can be some co-ordination of the activities of all the standing committees. At present there is at times some difficulty within the committees branch in finding accommodation and staff, and we think this could be overcome to a large extent if there were a chairmen's panel which would make the decisions as to when committees would meet or, if that could not be done, at least co-ordinate their thinking so there would not be this difficulty in finding accommodation.

Paragraph 23 of the report sets out that we should adjourn the house for a period of two weeks after three weeks of sitting, and that would come into effect after the main estimates have been tabled in the house. There are nine standing committees on estimates and legislation. We considered this number very carefully, and we believed it would be physically impossible for nine committees to meet concurrently without a lot of confusion developing. Therefore we recommend that half, or about half—that is four of these estimates standing committees—meet during one week of the two week adjournment and that the other four or five, whatever the case may be, meet during the second week of the two week adjournment. We recommend that this be continued throughout the session; that the house shall sit for three weeks and then stand adjourned for two weeks while the legislation and estimates committees would have the exclusive attention of hon. members.

We further recommend that the members be required to attend these meetings of the committees to which they have been ap-

[Mr. Olson.]