

Supply

breakdown of programs and a detailed analysis according to comprehensive audit principles.

Parliament, however, has not adjusted to this new formula for submitting the Government's expenditure proposals. Because of the obsolete operating procedures of its parliamentary committees, although they only go back to 1968, Parliament lacks the instruments it needs to carry out a proper analysis of all three parts of the estimates, and I would especially like to draw to the attention of the Chair the absence of any appropriate procedure for consideration by envelope, something none of our parliamentary committees can do as things stand now.

In any event, I hope that the Special Committee will be able to make recommendations to the House that will eventually provide Parliament with better ways of digesting, analyzing, criticizing, and reporting back to the House on Government expenditure proposals, and as far as I am concerned, I think the Committee should be able to do so fairly quickly.

However, procedures are only one aspect of the parliamentary process, which is now relatively well covered by the work of the Special Committee, and, in fact, I think all Members of this House are anxious to modernize this institution.

Attitudes are another aspect altogether. Unfortunately, attitudes cannot be regulated, and as my colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Smith) commented earlier, the atmosphere in this Parliament is pretty tense. How it got that way? I will let Hon. Members answer that question! In the past 18 months, the harmful atmosphere prevailing in the House since the beginning of this Parliament has given rise to novel dilatory tactics that are prejudicial to parliamentary life. Let me explain what I mean.

● (1750)

On the one hand, the House is a deliberative assembly. Everybody has to agree with me on that point. We are here to debate, to discuss proposals introduced either by the government or by private members, either to amend pieces of legislation, to propose new measures or to discuss the proposals or financial plans of the Government.

Unfortunately, a new dilatory tactic has been introduced in addition to all those already allowed under our rules, of which, needless to say, there is quite a number. This new dilatory tactic is aimed, for all practical purposes, at preventing the House from playing its fundamental role, namely to debate.

In this regard, I only have to recall what occurred recently and what is still occurring in relation to the government's proposals for the Crow rate because one party in this House has decided not only that it objects to these proposals, which it has a perfect right to do, not only that it objects in principle to these proposals, which is its privilege, but also that it objects to debating them in this House. Once again, I know that there are always two sides to an issue, and as the previous speaker

said earlier, there are reasons for this, and the fact that a time allocation motion appeared on the Order Paper has perhaps prompted some members to even refuse to debate the matter.

The fact remains, Mr. Speaker, that in some cases this House is no longer even a deliberative assembly because some members or parties prevent us from deliberating. This is an extremely dangerous trend on which we should all reflect individually because no committee of this House, whether a special or a standing committee, can codify or regulate attitudes.

The second basic characteristic of a legislative assembly is that its deliberations must lead to a conclusion. That is normal, the people expect us to take decisions. So the second strategy which has been developed is to prevent the House from reaching a conclusion once its deliberations are over. The Opposition resorts to a "technicality" of the Standing Orders which stems from a new interpretation given in Beauchesne's Fifth Edition. Unfortunately I do not have time to quote it because I want to leave a few minutes for my colleague to close the debate. I am referring to an interpretation of the Standing Orders, or a codification of a practice if you will, which does not exist, at least not in Beauchesne's Fourth Edition, namely the whips walking up the aisle to signal the Chair that the House is ready to vote. In Beauchesne's Fourth Edition—I am trying to rush, Mr. Speaker—it was the Sergeant-at-Arms who was designated as the one who walks up to the Chair to say that the House is ready to proceed with the vote, whereas in Beauchesne's Fifth Edition the two whips, the Government's and the Official Opposition's, do that. That new interpretation has made it possible in some instances to delay the vote indefinitely by keeping the bells ringing, and the saddest and best known example is obviously the bell ringing incident which lasted for ten days.

In my opinion, Mr. Speaker, there are reasons for that strategy, that dilatory tactic to which, I repeat, the Standing Orders offer no answer. There may be a way out through the residual powers of the Chair, but that is another question. With respect to our attitudes, Mr. Speaker, we will be unable to achieve a real parliamentary reform and the House will never again be a deliberating assembly where decisions are taken unless we act as responsible parliamentarians who accept those two essential roles in our work as legislators.

Mr. Donald W. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, before I begin my remarks, I want to commend my colleague from Rosemont (Mr. Lachance) for acting like a true parliamentarian. He has agreed to share the time remaining in this debate so that both of us would be able to make a few comments on the problem under study.

[*English*]

The motion before us is in a way a deception. I will tell the House why. I was brought up in the tradition of MacGregor Dawson and Alexander Brady, in the belief that Parliament