

constituency out there and still meet the needs, aspirations and the feelings of those people out there.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona): The question of the proposal with respect to three weeks on, one week off, has been around for a long time. It was looked at by the McGrath committee. It was not rejected at that time on its merits. It seems to me there are good arguments on both sides, and that is not the debate I am here to enter at this point.

I want to speak to what the member actually had to say and some of the things he did not say. He talked about governments having the right to implement their mandates. I agree with him. There is often irony in the questions that opposition members pose, but there are also examples of when governments bring forward things that they did not promise. All governments are guilty of this, and your government has been guilty of this as well, with respect. In my judgement, the GST and the free trade agreement, at least after 1984, are examples. There are times when the opposition feels that the government did not make point of saying it was going to do that, and I think it is legitimate at that point for people to make that part of the debate.

The member mentioned Question Period, which I think has deteriorated seriously in the time that I have been here. I remember when I first came here. Speaker Jerome was in the Chair. People were cut off if they had long preambles or were not permitted supplementaries. I think part of the deterioration of Question Period owes itself to the lack of discipline, with respect, that the Chair is unwilling to impose on the House, and also to the discipline of television, which looks for those 15 or 30-second sound bites which the old Question Period did not provide as easily. We have conformed ourselves to that medium and perhaps we need to take a second look at that.

The member made a point with respect to committees. He knows that when we considered these kinds of things during the McGrath committee, we also considered a process whereby the principle and the substance of bills would be considered beforehand in a way that this particular reform that he is now defending, does not introduce. That is one of the reasons why we are critical of it.

Government Orders

Finally, with respect to the whole question of efficiency, I think you could stand to introduce new efficiencies into this system if you at the same time introduced new meaning into those more efficient processes. This reform has failed to do that. You have not given real meaning and power to the participation of opposition members at the same time as you have introduced new efficiencies. That is where you fall down.

I wonder if the member could tell me why, in his defence, he did not mention the four areas where this reform—or deform, as we have called it—specifically goes back on recommendations made by the McGrath committee of which he was a part. The re-introduction of parliamentary secretaries into the standing committees is a case in point.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The time for questions and comments is over. Does the House give its unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Blaikie: Then there is the question of limited rooms for committees meeting within these envelopes, which will, as sure as I am standing here, have the effect of not permitting all committees to work when they want to work. That will take away the self-initiating power which the McGrath committee recommended. There is the question of legislative versus standing committees and the power which this reform would give to the government to decide whether or not a matter went to a legislative committee or a standing committee. Again, eroding the McGrath reforms. Finally, putting the whole matter of substitution even more under the Whips than it is now, when the spirit of the McGrath committee was to take power away from the Whips and invest it in the private members. The Whips have too much power over this place already. They are a scourge on this place. The essence of the McGrath report was to give more power to the private member, more power to committees, and that is exactly what this reform is not doing. In fact, the reform is going in the opposite direction.

I know I am not being fair in the sense that I have not given him the time to do so, but the member was a member of the McGrath committee and it would have been interesting to hear how he can justify these changes, knowing as I do, the position he held collective-