

Procedure Committee Report

ing orders. I mention this because there is no doubt that contained within the four corners of the fifteenth report are various suggestions which do not commend themselves in all respects to all members of the house. I refer, for example, to paragraph 17 which excepts from the operation of this order certain specified members such as Your Honour, the Prime Minister, the Deputy Speaker, the deputy chairman of committees, ministers of the cabinet, the chief government whip and so on.

There are other parts of the recommendations which deal with the personnel of committees, with the question of the quorum, with certain innovations which represent a real departure from our practice in the past, such as the suggestion that we should sit three weeks in the house, then adjourn for two weeks, during which half the committees would sit for one week and members would be free to return to their homes for constituency business during the other week.

No doubt all these points do not commend themselves with equal favour to the house, and it is not to be expected there will not be exception taken to some of them or suggestions that there should be amendments. But I would appeal to the house to bear in mind that what we are now dealing with are recommendations. Should this report be adopted in due course, it would then be necessary for the next committee on procedure to introduce from time to time next session, probably in a package arrangement, specifically worded changes in the standing orders. At this stage it would be possible for members who take exception to any specific part of this entire program to speak, vote and act in accordance with their views.

I suggest this because there has been concern on the part of members of the committee and, I know, of the house leaders, as to the machinery by which this particular report might be adopted without being referred back to the committee for further consideration. I would suggest to hon. members that they might regard this in the same fashion as the second reading of a bill; there could be approval in principle either on division or on a vote, and then the matter would be left in the hands of the committee to introduce specific amendments from time to time next session.

The question is, do we need changes in our procedure and, if so, what changes? In so far as basic principles are concerned, the rules we now have in my humble opinion bear a

[Mr. Baldwin.]

marked resemblance to those prevailing just after this country became a nation almost 100 years ago. There has been little alteration since. But what a change has taken place in the country itself. In 1867 there was a population of three million. Today it is 20 million. The first budget introduced involved \$20 million. Today the figure is well over \$7 billion, more than 350 times as much as the first budget.

Consider the subject matters dealt with in 1867 and today. In 1965 a pervasive, widespread program of social justice is in effect including hospitalization, family allowances, unemployment insurance and assistance, old age pensions and so on, as against a rudimentary, hit or miss occasional handout, mostly in the form of charity, in 1867. But the true inner core, our parliamentary institution, the mainspring of our democracy is by comparison with these other great improvements still a rude, creaking, ill-fitting mechanism which struggles in vain to perform the function which it should perform if we are to achieve the proper objectives of this house.

What should be this function, this principal role? In my opinion there are four points. I intend to relate them to the proposals which emanate from this fifteenth report. In the first instance there must be a careful examination of government spending. Second, there is need to examine the accounts of government after the spending has been completed in order to see that the money has been spent for the purposes and in the manner in which it was intended. Third, there is the need, as a legislative body, to exercise control over the executive. This session has certainly indicated the desirability of retaining this important feature. Fourth, the function of parliament is to enact legislation. In this respect, to what extent has our horizon not been expanded to limits never imagined a hundred years ago? The state has assumed responsibilities for social measures for the entire community and undertakings involving vast economic works. If our duties lie in this direction, and I suggest they do, may we not use them as a yardstick to measure the adequacy of our procedures? If so, it is my strong submission that what we are presenting here is essential in order that we may fulfil this role.

Take, for example, the question of the examination of government estimates. Today we find the government armed with extraordinarily extensive powers or authority little known or used in 1867. Interim supply, supplementary estimates, governor general's war-