

*Procedure and Organization*

ently the members of that committee travelled all over Canada, making appearances, asking questions and studying important agricultural matters. Again, the members of the committee derived great educational benefits from their travels at the expense of the taxpayers. Apparently the chairman of the committee, a government supporter of course, presented a report which had little relation to anything the members of the committee had been doing.

Then there is the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs which is studying the question of tobacco and the alleged evil effects of smoking, as well as other interesting matters. Now that the minister has made known his determination to dispense with the tobacco industry, perhaps he might apply his attention to other industries whose activities may have an effect on health. Although committee members were studying the subject of tobacco and smoking, the Minister of National Health and Welfare disregarded the opinions of members of that committee and announced what the government intended to do.

The Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence is a thoroughly good example. The government said it wanted to review foreign policy, what Canada's role should be with regard to the United Nations, peace-keeping, and other fields. The 30 members of that committee, with a staff of translators and others, were sent to Cyprus, Germany, Sweden—to find out what the neutrals are doing—Switzerland, Britain and France. You name it—we went there. The committee spent long hours on the road. It spent a long time in drawing up a report and—you have guessed it, Mr. Speaker—the government did not pay the slightest attention to that report. Of course, just because a lot of hard work has gone into the preparation of a report does not mean that the government is obliged to pay attention to it. Nevertheless, after all the talk about participatory democracy and how individual members were going to work and contribute so much toward participatory democracy, this apparently is the result at the end of the first year of the government's term of office. I do not think these actions show that the government is particularly good or particularly convincing, but they certainly show that we cannot put great weight on what government supporters say.

• (3:20 p.m.)

The committees were to be non-partisan. They were to study matters carefully and

[Mr. Nesbitt.]

make independent recommendations. Some of us who have been here a while and know how government parties operate had some misgivings whether that would be done. Despite the fact there was a new leader and many new members, some of us felt that the old tendencies would linger on, and they did.

All committee chairmen except one are government appointees and the government has control of all the committees so far as membership is concerned. That certainly has always been the custom. Under the old parliamentary scheme that was quite proper, but we were going to have a new sort of committee system, openly copied from the United States, with committees having some independence. It has not worked out this way at all. While chairmen of committees are supposed to be analogous to Your Honour, I do not think all the chairmen have the experience and other attributes found in Your Honour.

Sometimes we have had difficulties in getting the work done in committees. On some occasions government members have shown some independence, to their eternal credit. One instance was in the defence committee. There was a lot of arm-twisting in that committee but despite that a great number of government members maintained their independence, with the result that the committee report was ignored. When government members of the transport committee did not agree with their colleagues—I would hesitate to allude to this except that a senior member of the government raised the matter this morning—one would have thought a game of checkers was being played. They were removed from the committee and other members were substituted. One can hardly expect the committee system to operate satisfactorily in this way.

The government made pious pronouncements at the start of the year that the committees were going to be independent and about all they were going to do. Then they treat them in this way. It is no wonder the people have very grave doubts about equally pious statements by the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Macdonald) as to the purpose of rule 75c.

I could spend the balance of my time giving other examples. I cannot help but lack confidence in the promises of the government. Take the roster system, for example. This is one more way to downgrade parliament. Without consulting anyone, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) said it would make parliament more efficient. Certain ministers were to