

*Motion for Concurrence in Report*

violent disagreement is entirely false and does a great disservice to all members of the committee and also, I suggest, to all members of this house.

All hon. members will be aware that since 1964 this house has carried on much of its important business under a series of provisional orders. The reforms which have been accomplished by these orders are important, but it was generally recognized that the house could not complete the task of reforming its procedure until it had dealt with important matters such as the business of supply and the legislative process. These matters were studied intensively by a committee in the last session of the last parliament. The fourth and fifth reports of that committee, which were filed on March 13 and March 20, 1968, form the background for the report which is now presented to the house.

First, I propose to deal with the business of supply, because if this aspect of our report is adopted it will provide the framework and the parliamentary timetable about which all the other business of the house will revolve.

I need not remind hon. members that under the present provisional rules supply is discussed in two stages. There are four two-day debates on supply motions and 30 days are allocated to the consideration of estimates in the committee of supply, a total of 38 days in all.

I think it is fair to say that the handling of the supply business of the house satisfies no one and it is the subject of much justifiable criticism. First and most important, it fails—and it has always failed throughout the life of all the parliaments of Canada—to satisfy its basic purpose of providing for a full, careful scrutiny of the estimates of departments. Whether or not a fixed period has been set for the conclusion of the business of supply, the *Hansards* of our parliaments are full of lamentations and condemnations of the practice of passing numerous items of supply without debate, without scrutiny, without check at the end of the session or at the end of a supply period. I call your attention, Mr. Speaker, to the fact that most of these lamentations which have always been on record come from the years before the time that there was a formal limit on the number of supply days.

In addition, I think it is fair to point out that such discussion and scrutiny as there has been of supply, particularly in recent parliaments, have tended to occur long after a good part of the money has been spent. This

scrutiny long after the event runs counter to the theory of parliament appropriating money only when it is satisfied that the purposes are proper.

Without derogation of hon. members I think it is also fair to comment that the debates on supply estimates tend to be general speech-making events on the part of both opposition and government members. There are few, if any, detailed questions about the money expenditures proposed. The speeches are uneven in their effect, concentrating always on the first item of the departmental estimates and leaving many items undiscussed.

In addition to this unsatisfactory discussion of estimates in committee of supply, the practice on supply motion debates is equally unsatisfactory and imprecise. As the house well knows, on the four occasions now prescribed by the provisional rules when the government must propose a motion to go into committee of supply, it is the right of the opposition to move amendments and sub-amendments and to raise serious issues of national policy. These debates, although valuable, lose considerably their force and effect for two reasons: first of all, because they are too few in number and second, because no proper notice is given. It is only in the latter stages of these debates that the members of the house are prepared fully to grapple with the points which have been raised.

The principal purpose of your committee in dealing with the business of supply was to restore vigour and purpose to the supply proceedings of the house. Your committee noted that the British parliament, for example, no longer undertakes any detailed scrutiny of estimates in advance and reserves supply days for general discussions of national policy matters that are raised by the opposition.

In essence, Mr. Speaker, your committee, on this question of supply, adopted the unanimous recommendation of its predecessor committee made in March, 1968, which combines the British concept of general days of debate in the house with continuing scrutiny of the details of the estimates by standing committees of the house. In connection with the business of supply, your committee recommends that parliament should adhere to a regular yearly timetable. The session, it recommends, should start normally in the month of September or early October of each year and should terminate around July 1 of the following year.

For the purpose of the allocation of supply the parliamentary session would be divided