

Procedure and Organization

[*Editor's note: The list referred to above is as follows:*]

Documents of the Fourth Subcommittee

(a) Some features of interest in the procedures and organization of the British House of Commons (Mr. George Carty).

(b) Some features of interest in the procedures and organization of the French parliament (Mr. George Carty).

(c) The committee structure of the House of Commons at Westminster (Mr. Philip Laundry).

(d) The committee structure of the French national assembly (Mr. Philip Laundry).

(e) Reform of parliamentary committees (Mr. Robert Armstrong).

(f) The committee structure of the congress of the United States (Mr. Michael Kirby).

(g) Classification of committees in the Canadian House of Commons (Mr. Michael Kirby).

(h) Nominal lists of parliamentary and congressional committees in the legislatures of Canada, Great Britain, France, and the United States (Mr. Michael Kirby).

(i) Some features of interest in the procedures and organization in the legislative assembly of the state of Victoria (Mr. C. B. S. Dobson).

(j) Some features of interest in the procedures and organization in the legislative assembly of the state of New South Wales (Mr. C. B. S. Dobson).

(k) Statistical data prepared by the committees and private legislation branch of the House of Commons.

(l) List of suggestions for parliamentary reform made by party leaders and other members of the House of Commons.

(m) Some features of interest in the procedures and organization in the parliaments of Australia and New Zealand (Mr. Robert Thompson).

(n) Summary of Mr. Lambert's impressions of his visit to certain legislatures in western Europe.

Mr. Olson: Essentially the report provides that all the main estimates, when they are tabled in this house by the minister of finance, shall automatically be referred to the appropriate standing committee. In this regard we have set up nine new committees, if you want to call them that, or renamed the committees, with at least one designated to consider each part of the estimates tabled in this house.

Some consideration was given to the physical limitations of the number of committees which would be meeting concurrently or simultaneously. There was also some consideration given by the fourth subcommittee to the suggestion that we adjourn every Wednesday while parliament is in session, setting it aside for the exclusive consideration of estimates by the committees. Consideration was given to a number of other ways by which we could give more and greater attention to the consideration of estimates.

One of the points which required a great deal of consideration by the members related

to the designation of committees. We considered names for these new committees very carefully, and I am sure there will be some objection to the names suggested. We even considered simply numbering a large number of standing committees rather than giving them names, because of the connotations which might be placed on particular names. For instance, in the matter of the Department of Labour and the designation of a special committee, there was no disagreement that this was a tremendously important department, of sufficient importance that it warrants a standing committee by itself. That also applies to the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Olson: In relation to the Department of Veterans Affairs, when considering matters which come within that designation we had to bear in mind that many things would have to be sent to the committee when considering the estimates. We felt that at this time the Department of Veterans Affairs is concerned largely with veterans hospitals, pensions and things of that sort. Certainly the same committee which considered the Department of National Health and Welfare estimates would also be concerned with pensions and hospitalization. Therefore we put the Department of Veterans Affairs in with the Department of National Defence. It was moved out once, moved back in and moved out again.

We have included the Department of National Defence and the Department of External Affairs in one of the nine committees. There can be no argument that each of these departments is large enough to warrant a committee, but in the consolidation of the standing committees it was necessary to reduce their number and try to find some common ground or at least some common area of interest in assigning the various departments to the committees. By the way, Mr. Speaker, appendix "B" to the fifteenth report does in fact give the detailed assignment to committees of all the departments and agencies of the government. We do not regard this assignment as perfect, but after a great deal of consideration we thought this was probably the best we could do at the time in grouping those areas where there is some common interest.

In going through the report, Mr. Speaker, you will see that there is an introduction in the first six paragraphs. We say in part by way of introduction that we recognize that