

committee meeting, I had to rule out one of my own colleagues. Surely that neutrality is in place and it must be assumed that any Member from whatever side is seen to be and is in fact neutral when chairing a meeting and enforcing the rules.

● (1740)

I think that begs the question of what is in the motion. The motion says that the Government—and I submit not only this Government but many previous Governments—has bypassed Parliament. I agree with that portion of the resolution. The practice of giving press conferences and everything else avoids and evades not only the House of Commons but also committees. Surely that is where the responsibility lies, first on the Government because it initiates policy and legislation, and second, on the Opposition Parties because they too have a counter-responsibility not only to oppose but to propose. This is where the word accommodation comes in. Again the Government, because it can initiate legislation, has the responsibility more often than not to make the first move to accommodate. There is almost an equal responsibility on the part of the Opposition Parties to make moves to accommodate so as to get the business of Parliament done faster. Too often when we have tried to do that we did not even get the courtesy of an answer. Surely that is what contributes to the 100 and some speeches about which the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Smith) was complaining. What does he expect Members of the Opposition to do, just lie down, not say anything, give up and cry? Of course not. We have no other choice but to do what can be construed by the Government and some of the media as obstruction. What other choice do we have if the Government is not willing to accommodate? It seems to me that that word “accommodation” could overcome much of what is in the motion put forward by the Leader of the Opposition.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): The previous occupant of the Chair indicated to me upon my arrival that the appropriate order of recognizing hon. Members would be for the Chair to see the Hon. Member for Rosemont (Mr. Lachance) and then to see the Hon. Member for Esquimalt-Saanich (Mr. Munro). I know of no understanding between Hon. Members that might affect that agreement. But obviously there is not enough time for both Members to speak in light of the total time available. I would assume that some accommodation has been made. I have already indicated that that is the assumption on which I was working. I will recognize the Hon. Member for Rosemont. Of course, if an Hon. Member wishes to rise on a point of order, I will hear him.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude-André Lachance (Rosemont): Certainly, Mr. Speaker. I am prepared to give my colleague half the time we have left, if he agrees.

In the hallway, on my way to the House, I noticed the Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Nielsen). He was alive and

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well, and what better proof of an old French saying, which translates as: Being ridiculous is not a fatal affliction. I must say that the motion moved by the Hon. Leader of the Opposition comes as somewhat of a surprise from a former House Leader who has more or less invented a new dilatory tactic for which there is no parliamentary remedy. At the end of my speech I intend to get back to this problem of using the bells and refusing to come in for a vote as a dilatory tactic. First, however, I would like to indicate the principles according to which the House operates and, more particularly, the two lynch pins of our proceedings, namely, the Standing Orders, which, as everyone knows, have a number of deficiencies and which are being scrutinized by a special committee in an attempt to provide appropriate remedies, and the attitudes of Members on which depends the ability of this House, on a day-to-day basis, to reach a consensus on the most appropriate manner of conducting its business.

As far as procedure itself is concerned, the Special Committee has already tabled an interim report, and many of the recommendations proposed by Committee Members are now part of the Standing Orders, at least on a provisional basis.

I would like to spend a few minutes on one aspect of our Standing Orders and parliamentary practice that is now being studied by the Special Committee and regarding which recommendations may be made, we hope, in the not too distant future. I am referring to the Government's obligation to be accountable to Parliament, with respect to its finances. Mr. Speaker, Hon. Members will be aware that a sub-committee of the Special Committee—a sub-committee of which I have the honour to be a Member and which is known in our parlance as the Huntington-Lachance Committee has formulated a number of recommendations for the Special Committee which are aimed at making the Government accountable to the House and at giving Parliament the mechanisms it needs to deal with this accountability in an appropriate manner.

I hope that once again, the Committee will be able to submit recommendations that will receive the support of the House and its Members, but I would like to add that it is essential that Parliament should improve its ability to exercise this basic parliamentary right, namely, to oblige the Government to account for its finances.

Since the Lambert Commission made its proposals, which led to a new system for tabling budget votes, Hon. Members have been able to obtain information from the annual Estimates tabled by the President of the Treasury Board in a more easily digestible form. The Estimates are now published in three volumes. Part I explains Government expenditures in terms of Government envelopes, for instance, a social envelope, an economic envelope, and so forth, which gives a better idea of the priorities set by the Government in each of these major areas of Government activity. Part II provides details on votes being submitted for approval by the Government, such as person-years and technical resources, including the capital expenditures required, and finally, Part III provides a detailed