

Standing Orders

sad if we could not operate Parliament in a modern way in a modern society.

One recommendation of the McGrath committee concerned allowing Parliament to be the master of its own place. We know that many parliamentarians do not have proper office space, that some of us are crowded in our offices, and that indeed the facilities on the Hill could be improved. There has been a recommendation to introduce the concept of a small unit under an intendant of Parliament who operates under the responsibility of the Speaker of the House and the Speaker of the Senate and does the work we now ask Public Works, the National Capital Commission, or other organizations to perform on our behalf, with the feeling that these people do not have at heart the interest of parliamentarians. This is another area upon which I hope the Government will act in the very near future through the auspices of the Board of Internal Economy.

In closing, let me say that I am sure our former colleague, the now Lieutenant-Governor of Newfoundland, must be very happy today to see his good work enshrined as permanent rules of the House of Commons.

Miss Aideen Nicholson (Trinity): Mr. Speaker, I would like to join with those who have congratulated the House Leaders and the other Members on achieving a resolution of the outstanding problems which were interfering with the very positive step of adopting as a permanency the provisional rules. Tremendous progress has been made with these provisional rules.

I would merely like to point out that there is still room for improvement in the way we deal with supply. I would hope that those who are concerned with this matter will continue to try to improve it. It is a very long established democratic principle that there should be no taxation without representation. However, the other side is that the way in which the taxpayers' money, having been collected, is spent should also be carefully examined by the representatives of the people.

● (1630)

Over the years there have been many changes, from the days when the whole business of supply was dealt with in Committee of the Whole to the various arrangements that we have now whereby sundry standing committees examine Estimates. This system is not working as well as it should in one important way. It is not easy for Members of Parliament now to get an overview of supply because parts of the Estimates go into different committees. On another occasion I hope to have the opportunity to put forward some proposals on how we could make a more thoughtful and careful examination of the business of supply.

There have been some improvements over the years, particularly in the quality of the financial information available to Members of Parliament. Part III of the Estimates gives a lot more information than was available some years ago

and gives it in a usable form, but there are still many more changes to be made.

As I congratulate those who have worked long and hard on the reform of the rules of the House, I do hope that we will see further changes to improve the quality of examination of financial information and expenditure.

Mr. Albert Cooper (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a couple of moments to add a few comments. First, the whole process of parliamentary and procedural reform really goes through a process of ebb and flow. It is not very often that we get an opportunity where all of the ingredients come together that would allow us to undertake major reforms in an institution such as the House of Commons. Those ingredients I think have all come together in the last little while.

The process was begun by Tom Lefebvre to whom reference was made earlier. It was then picked up by James McGrath and we had the well known McGrath report which really has been the foundation of so many of the reforms with which we are dealing in the House of Commons. The Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) then continued the process and really carried it through, wanting to see the reforms become part of his new Government. When those major reforms are in place you come to a very crucial point in the whole process of reform, but there is bound to be some fall-out, some problems that come from any major reform. You have then two options, either do the tinkering and adjustments that need to be done or rancour can set in, dissolve the whole process and really undermine the kinds of reforms that have gone on before.

I want to add to the many thanks already expressed to the House Leaders who I think have very much saved the process by coming together in making this agreement. They have set the tone. They have allowed that freedom, that excitement and enthusiasm we felt for the reforms to continue. Our work is not completed, as suggested by speakers in the debate. There are adjustments and things that have to be done. Today, with the tone set by the Government House Leader and the two Opposition House Leaders, we have really firmly established that tradition of reform on which we have been trying to build during the last few months.

I think it is very pleasing to all Members of the House, no matter where they sit, on the back bench or the front bench, to see this come to a resolution and to know that we can now proceed with the amendment which, I am sure, will be passed by the House of Commons.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, speaking on behalf of my colleagues in the House, I simply want to say, now that we are about to adopt this motion, that we are very pleased that an agreement has been reached.

I have just one comment for the Government House Leader. Occasionally, we are taken somewhat by surprise when Government Orders are called, and I wonder whether we could be given a list of these orders more often so that Members