

or one which can be debated other than on an opposition day.

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton-East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, I have a very keen interest in the matter of moving concurrence in reports. I regret that the chairman of the Standing Committee on Regional Development is not present today because we are of a like mind on this matter. I am sure the chairman of all committees would take a like stand on the matter. On a number of occasions today, the parliamentary secretary alluded to Standing Order 58, and section (16) in particular. I point out to Your Honour that Standing Order 58(16) is there for one purpose, namely moving concurrence in a report.

The parliamentary secretary stated that a motion to concur should not be entertained. Why then do we have Standing Order 58(16)? I think it is clear that if there were no reports, there would be no need for the rule. However, the rule is there and a motion to concur is certainly in order. I do not agree with the parliamentary secretary's suggestion that such a motion should not be entertained. I do not understand how the parliamentary secretary arrives at that interpretation.

The parliamentary secretary spoke about the fact that committees are restricted in the matters upon which they can report. As has been indicated in several procedural rulings of late, precedents play a great role in this House. I remind the parliamentary secretary that the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Jamieson) was present at the meeting of the Standing Committee on Regional Development. He took part in a discussion of many matters not covered according to the interpretation of the parliamentary secretary. The minister in charge of the department saw fit to discuss matters far beyond the restrictions the parliamentary secretary is trying to place on the House today. I think his argument, especially with respect to the Standing Orders, amounts to an abuse, as was indicated by my hon. friend from Peace River a few minutes ago, as well as by the hon. member for Winnipeg North. He himself established a precedent some time ago in this respect.

● (1250)

I repeat, not only has the minister of the department in which I have been rightly interested taken part in going far beyond restrictions of which the hon. member speaks, but evidence from every committee would indicate that this is the case. Again, I regret that committee chairmen are not here today to defeat the argument put forward by the parliamentary secretary on this particular matter.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I readily agree with Your Honour's statement that in dealing with this point of order we are coming to grips with an important aspect of parliamentary procedure. Before I get to the main points I wish to make, the parliamentary Secretary to the President of Privy Council (Mr. Reid) will forgive me if I seek to correct him with regard to two or three things he said.

First, I refer to his suggestion that the adoption by the House of the third report of the standing committee on Transport and Communications would, in effect, amount to a direction to the government to spend money. The

Transport and Communications

words of the report are very clear, namely, that the committee "recommends to the government that it consider the advisability of" doing such and such. I suggest, therefore, that if the House were to agree to concur in that report, the House would be doing the same thing, that is to say, recommending that the government consider the advisability of doing such and such. In other words, we would be doing exactly the same thing as if we were to pass any one of most of the motions under private members' notices of motions that are on the order paper. This is not crucial to the point before us today but I think this opposing point of view might be placed on the record.

The second comment I wish to make is with respect to an obiter dictum of the parliamentary secretary which he gave when he was referring to motions which could be put down for the purpose of discussing estimates on opposition days. He suggested this privilege was not limited to members of the opposition and that supporters of the government in his view, were able to do likewise. I believe the wish was father to the thought. I draw his attention to Standing Order 58(3) which states:

Opposition motions on allotted days may be moved only by members in opposition to the government and may relate to any matter within the jurisdiction of the Parliament of Canada and also may be used for the purpose of considering reports of standing committees relating to consideration of estimates therein.

I think that if the parliamentary secretary, as a member of the government side, wants to have one of these motions put down he will have to find a friend in the opposition to do it for him. He should not have too much trouble in that respect.

The third comment the parliamentary secretary made to which I take some exception is his criticism of these motions for concurrence in committee reports being placed on the order paper under Routine Proceedings. I would remind the hon. member that it was as a result of a decision of Your Honour three or four years ago in a particular case which arose because of a motion put down by the hon. member for Athabasca (Mr. Yewchuk) that these motions are placed there in the names of members, whether they are members of the particular committee mentioned or not. If the parliamentary secretary says we have to divide sheep from goats, or apples from oranges, I shall not quarrel with him. Certainly, I have a motion down under Routine Proceedings for concurrence in the report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs; it will be called next week if the government does not keep its commitment. The issue about whether or not the committee exceeded its terms of reference does not, of course, arise in this case at all, because that committee was considering a report of a special joint study group which had been referred to it. It was not a case of estimates at all. So I think the sweeping statement made by the parliamentary secretary that these motions should not appear under the item Routine Proceedings is one which ought to be qualified in the light of Your Honour's ruling and in the light of the facts.

These are the three preliminary comments I wished to make by way of clearing the record. I have a few further observations in mind with regard to the main issue before us; I shall make them briefly but I do not think I can do so in 30 seconds. Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether I might call it one o'clock?