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ment side for instance, voting against government measures. It means that the cabinet and the Prime Minister have to be much more sensitive to backbench opinion and that is a good thing.

I also want to say to Reform Party members that with respect to the rules of the House there is nothing more left to be done. As a result of the McGrath committee report all the technical language of confidence was taken out of the standing orders.

Prior to 1985, the word "confidence" did appear in the standing orders with respect to allotted days, supply days, et cetera. What that committee recommended was that all the language of confidence be taken out of the standing orders so that from that day forward nothing would be technically or procedurally a matter of confidence. The only things that would be matters of confidence would be things that were declared at the political level by the government to be matters of confidence.

There is nothing in the rules of the House of Commons at this point that prevents the government or any other political party from having free votes. It is all a matter of the culture of the particular government or the political party. As members will have noticed even among themselves this is a difficult thing to overcome.

As far as I know even the Reform Party itself has tended to vote as a party. You tend to have similar positions, but when you do not there should be the freedom to express the variety of opinion that exists within the caucus, particularly on the government side. I say that because it is harder on the government. There is no reason on earth why government should regard everything as a matter of confidence.

What the McGrath committee recommended was that unless the government explicitly declares something to be a matter of confidence, it is not. It is a matter of political culture in the final analysis. It is not a matter of procedure. It is not a matter of rules. It is related to the media and how they treat division within parties, et cetera. It is a question of trying to change our attitude around here. Procedurally we can lead the horse to water but we cannot make it drink. It has to drink by itself.

The government has to drink from the river of diversity within its own ranks, just as other political parties do, and that takes courage. It takes courage on the part of political leaders and it takes courage on the part of political backbenchers no matter what party they belong to.

In the final analysis, there is not a member of Parliament here who is not free to get up and vote differently than his party or his leader, or her party or her leader, any time they want.

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Therefore I think there is a mistake in approach on the part of my Reform colleagues who keep insisting there is something the government must do. There is nothing the government could do. All the government needs to do is to set its own members free. There is nothing procedurally or legislatively or anything like that that needs to be done.

It is not clear when they are speaking. I am not making this up. Their argument sounds as if there is something the government should be doing. The thing they could do best, if they are really serious about this, is to demonstrate it in their own practices.

I just wanted Reformers to know that this call for less party discipline, for more distance from the confidence convention and for less domination by parties in the House of Commons precedes their arrival. I am sure it goes back a long time. It goes back to the non-partisan movements of the 1920s and 1930s to the Progressive Party and various other things. But its most recent incarnation here happened in the 1980s as a result of the McGrath committee report. Even before that there was the Lefebvre committee which was chaired by the late Senator Tom Lefebvre when he was a member of this House. That committee made recommendations on this.

There has been progress. When you come here as a member, you think things as they are are the way they have always been, but prior to 1985 we could not even vote on private members' bills unless there was unanimous consent. There are a variety of other ways in which individual members have been given more power to express themselves as individuals, not just in private members' business but in committees.

Prior to 1985 a committee could only study what the government asked it to study. Committees had no independent power to decide to study this or that. If I had the time I could go on and list a number of other things. I just say this because there is, I would say, a certain kind of hubris on the part of my Reform colleagues that there were no parliamentary reformers before they arrived.

There have been reforms and there have been a lot of us who have been advocating these kinds of reforms partially successfully and partially without success. Let us carry on, but let us not act as if nothing happened before we got here.

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member for Winnipeg Transcona's comments with interest and I agreed with very much of what he said. In fact his own party was born from a reform tradition. We in the Reform Party have made many comments about Canada's reform tradition not only in western Canada but in the province of Quebec, at that time it was Upper Canada.