

Procedure Committee Report

remark. As I say, the backbone of the committee report, it seems to me, relates to the type of committee structure which we are going to have, the functions the committees will have, and the times at and the ways in which they will meet.

When the hon. member for Port Arthur was addressing himself to the substance of the report he said that he felt the same thing would happen in the future as happened in the past, namely that the most active members of the house would also be the most active members on the committees. I think that is inevitable. However, it is worth while pointing out that the hope of the committee on procedure would be that each member of the house would sit as only one of the standing committees on legislation and estimates, and would have as a secondary function membership in one of the remaining six standing committees. But his main task would relate primarily to one committee. Therefore unlike the situation today, he would be able to devote a great deal of his time and energy to a particular area of consideration, and become more knowledgeable in his work on that committee.

I am not going to take up any further time because other members who wish to discuss aspects of this report will no doubt want to speak. I know the committee welcomes ideas and criticisms of the proposal. We are as conscious as anybody else of the fact that strengthening the committees structure in a parliamentary system is difficult. I think we on the committee are aware of the problems concerning the whole concept of cabinet responsibility. We must work within that framework. We cannot therefore give the committees the kind of wide ranging powers of initiative and inquiry which the committees have in the United States. Personally, I think that in many instances we could send bills after first reading to committees. That is not in the committee report, however; it is the kind of much more radical proposal that we will probably discuss at some later time. As legislation becomes increasingly complex, as it does in modern society, there is perhaps a great deal to be said for letting a committee of this house thrash out in committee in the first instance, the detailed aspects of that legislation. Then when it is brought to the house, a whole area of controversy and difficulty will have been covered by the committee. At this time we are not going that far. Rather, we are suggesting that we make an attempt to have members' time spent in a more valuable way in committee, and members' time spent in a more valuable way in

[Miss Jewett.]

the house. That is the desired and anticipated result of this reorganization proposal.

Mr. J. H. Horner (Acadia): Mr. Speaker, in rising to take part in the discussion regarding the rules of this house I should like to commend the members who worked so hard and diligently under your guidance to prepare this report. It indicates that they did do a great deal of work and concerned themselves greatly with the rules of the house, and how they could be changed to speed up the process of legislation.

This report recommends substantial changes to the house rules. I think each member must ask himself whether these substantial changes, which will cause a great upheaval so far as the rules of this house are concerned, will accomplish the purposes for which they have been designed. Will these changes make it possible for me as a member of this house to represent my constituents more efficiently?

I listened with care to the speeches made by hon. members this afternoon, because many of them were members of the committee which has proposed these recommendations. I believe they have attempted to project their feelings regarding the rules of the house into this report.

We heard a great deal about the length of this session and the amount of work accomplished. I look at these things perhaps in a slightly different way. I want to know how the rule changes suggested by this report will help me represent my constituents. I am here as a member of parliament, as other hon. members, to examine government spending and attempt to redirect the government's thinking in regard to future expenditures in a way that will be favourable and acceptable not only to my constituents but to all people of Canada. How will these changes in the rules help me represent my constituents? I think all hon. members must find the answer to that question before they readily adopt any sweeping or substantial changes such as are outlined in this report. Will these changes create a wider area in which I can examine government spending? Will they give me a better opportunity to direct or redirect government thinking? Will these changes allow me more room for inquiry? I do not think they will accomplish these purposes. Mr. Speaker, I listened very attentively to previous speakers in an attempt to find answers to these questions, but I am still unconvinced that the changes will create these improvements.