

*The Address*

Within this House, it causes behaviour which is not well viewed by the public.

There have been a lot of changes. In 1984, this government in its throne speech promised parliamentary reform, and the McGrath committee was appointed. It did excellent work. It looked at how this House functions, from ministerial accountability to the legislative process to committees.

The McGrath committee had three reports and recommended a total of 119 individual changes. It had 119 individual recommendations and 92 of those are totally in effect. There are 17 more that are partially in effect. Only 10 were not implemented, and most of those were for reasons of impracticality. It was not for political reasons. For example, there was a recommendation that the Justice Building be taken over for members' offices, and so on.

An overwhelming number of recommendations were approved. Committees were given their own budgets, staff and research for special projects, and could perform research on special projects on their own authority.

Prior to 1984, a committee could only meet if the government House leader authorized it to meet. It could only look into those things the government House leader authorized them to look into. Now committees can look into whatever subject they choose. They have their own budgets and research facilities. They have a lot more authority and there is more opportunity for members to have some influence.

An example of the kind of thing that is happening is: after the reforms came into effect, the number of committee reports in a two-year period went from 27 in 1987 to 29 in 1990. There were only 10 and 12 reports from committees in the two years prior to the McGrath commission.

There was almost a doubling of the number of studies. A lot of those reports were excellent and formed the foundation for changes in the law and for changes in the way Canada views a number of issues. They in fact represent substantial good works by members of Parliament.

We now have a process of review of Order in Council appointments. Everybody appointed by cabinet to a

position in this country can be brought before a committee of the House. Their credentials are examined to see whether they are worthy of the position. That is new; that never happened before. Committees are set up to follow government departments and are better organized. Committee members have the ability to travel and to call witnesses. Sound recordings of standing committees are permitted.

Private Members' Business was changed. A random system for selecting Private Members' Business was introduced outside the executive's control.

A committee of private members makes the draws. Prior to 1984—in other words, my first 12 years in Parliament—there was only one private member's bill passed to my recollection. That one was by the late Father Sean O'Sullivan. It was a bill to make the beaver the official animal of Canada.

Since those reforms we have had a number of private members' bills passed; not a lot, but a lot more than happened before that.

Those are important changes. The election of the Speaker was an important change, as were Statements by Ministers with equal opportunity for the opposition, more hours of business, and so on.

Phase two of the reforms was introduced at the conclusion of last session. Again they enhanced committee activity. There was more emphasis on precedent. We are now allowing television into committees, which is a recommendation of a committee of this House. It will be a committee of this House that will decide the rules on how television works, not the government House leader or the government. It will make those decisions.

Private Members' Business has been enhanced. There is more flexibility in substituting items. Now we will need to debate a bill for only three hours to bring it to a vote, rather than five hours. That is a significant improvement.

There will be more private members' bills passed. There will be more days for consideration of private members' business than was the case previously.

We have carried on with the reforms, empowering private members in the last changes to the rules. That having been said, there still is a clear view that we need to do more and there is a clear sense that this place needs more reforms.