

*Procedure Committee Report*

**Mr. Pearson:** Yes, you might find another bill. So I hope that this idea of periodic breaks, which I think is a good one, would not be in a form which would be quite as rigid and inflexible as it is in this recommendation.

I have the feeling, although perhaps I am a little too pessimistic about this, that it might be somewhat difficult to get members of committees to work in Ottawa when the other members were not here.

We now come to the section dealing with procedure on estimates. In my view I think this is the most important and valuable part of the report. I hope it will commend itself to the house and that it will be put into effect quickly. If, however, the standing committees dealing with estimates, which I understand would be chosen by the opposition members of the house, are to feel they are doing a meaningful job—and this must apply to all committees—then surely there must be the feeling that the discussion they have in committee will not be repeated in the committee of the whole in the house. I can think of nothing more frustrating or discouraging to committee members than to have their work repeated in the house, in some cases almost word for word, in the discussion. That is why I think paragraph 29 is a very important part indeed of the report. It says:

Your committee recommends that not more than 20 days be set aside for debating the main estimates in committee of supply. On such days it should be the right of the opposition to select the departments for discussion.

These are the main recommendations of the report, Mr. Speaker, and the ones which I consider to be the most important in my judgment are the ones which I feel should be adopted as quickly as possible.

In paragraph 30 the committee recognizes that the procedural changes suggested would require further study by the committee in order to be transformed into standing orders. So, Mr. Speaker, I suggest, in the hope that it will commend itself to the house, that the committee might meet again and consider concentrating on the preparation of draft standing orders on those points on which there seems to be general agreement. I believe it would be particularly helpful to the work of this house to have the new structure of committees which is suggested in the report implemented, with one or two slight amendments which I have ventured to suggest; and that a definite provision be made in the standing orders for the reference of estimates to appropriate committees. The government, I might say, would certainly welcome such a

standing order, particularly if it was combined with the suggestion in paragraph 29 that no more than 20 days be set aside for debating the main estimates in committee of supply, with the right of the opposition to select the departments for discussion.

It seems to me that these two changes combine to represent a very important improvement in our procedures, and a substantial saving of the time of the house. If such a standing order could be drafted before the end of this session the house might be prepared to accept it on an experimental basis for the next session of parliament. Then in the light of the experience of the next session we could see what further changes, if any, were required to it. So I hope, Mr. Speaker, that this kind of procedure will commend itself to the house.

Perhaps I may conclude my remarks by once again thanking the members of the subcommittee, the members of the committee and yourself and especially the chairman of the subcommittee for the very important, valuable work which they have done.

**Mr. Knowles:** I should just like to ask the Prime Minister a question, if I may. Is it fair to assume that, though he did not like the rigidity of the terms which were set out regarding the house adjourning for certain periods of time for committees to meet, he would not be opposed to the principle of there being times when committees might sit when the house itself was not sitting?

**Mr. Pearson:** No, I am not opposed to that in principle, Mr. Speaker. I have the worry I have already expressed, that in the implementation of this principle it might introduce an element of rigidity into our common business. If you had a cut-off date laid down by rule you would have to suspend whatever work you were doing when you reached that date, and I do not think that would be wise. I am also worried about the committees being compulsorily put to work when the House of Commons is not working. There will be times when that must be done, I think, but I wonder whether it would be wise to write that kind of thing into the rules, rules which are not easy to change.

**Mr. Thompson:** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister. Is it not correct that the committee's report recommended that this procedure take place only while the estimates are being considered; that it is not a procedure which would be in effect through the entire sitting year of the session?