

concessions by the Government, again granted to the Opposition in the interest of facilitating the orderly progress of the House and preserving a strong institution of parliamentary democracy.

Again, I want to thank all Hon. Members for their co-operation, diligence, and patience in working through this very difficult task. I think we are all richer as a result of going through this exercise.

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, I want to confirm that the proposal of the Government House Leader is something that has been arrived at by negotiation and agreement between the House Leaders. In this context, I think it would be useful to remind the House of the conclusions of the Special Committee on Standing Orders and Procedure of the House of Commons. At the time it was presided over by Tom Lefebvre, now a member of the other place.

● (1620)

He said:

Parliamentary procedure must serve the interests of the House as a whole and favour no one party or faction above another. Reforms, if they are to be effective, must be arrived at on the basis of consensus and compromise.

I think this has been proven by what we see transpiring in the House at this time.

As the Government House Leader has said, the Government has made certain concessions. However, I think it should be recognized that the opposition Parties have also noted some of the concerns of the Government and have been willing to have that taken into account as well.

I want to say, therefore, that what we see here is not only consistent with the recommendations of the Special Committee on Standing Orders and Procedure, as I quoted from its report, but it is certainly consistent with the general way in which the House operates when we are dealing with its procedures.

I want to say in a very positive spirit that if the Government had been willing to continue discussions on this matter, what we had undertaken last week, we might well have arrived at this point without time being taken to debate the motion in question, time that might well have been used for consideration of the Government's legislative program.

That being said, I want to confirm again that what was put before the House represents the result of fruitful negotiations among the House Leaders of the three Parties. The Government House Leader has spoken about the matter in a very generous and open spirit. We must recognize and hope that it will be typical of his efforts over the coming months. Certainly, if that is the case, he will see a response of a constructive nature on our part. It is a matter of give and take, consensus, and compromise when we are dealing with the procedures of the House and the organization of House business.

As I have said, what we see at this point in time confirms that very key aspect of the House of Commons.

Standing Orders

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Member for Windsor West (Mr. Gray).

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy today to join with the House Leader of the Opposition and the House Leader of the Government in support of the amended motion and to indicate that it reflects the true spirit of Parliament. For many months the three political Parties have negotiated a change to the Standing Orders, a change to the rules and procedures of the House of Commons which will make life more meaningful and facilitate both the business of the House, from the Government's point of view, and the effective role of the opposition Parties.

As the Government House Leader has indicated, I also appreciate the spirit of co-operation which existed, not only among the House Leaders but among their hard-working staff and other Members who are committed to the process. They have actually worked long and hard behind the scenes to make this moment possible. It certainly took a bit of give and take. It took a great deal of openness on all sides to arrive at this particular point. I am pleased to say that it will facilitate the business of the House.

On that note it might be appropriate to cease this discussion to enable the House to get on with some very important business.

Hon. André Ouellet (Papineau): Mr. Speaker, indeed I am very happy that many of the recommendations of the McGrath report will now become permanent rules of the House. It is a significant achievement for the Parliament of Canada. It is to the credit of the Government that it accepted these recommendations. Certainly it is to the credit of Members on both sides of the House who worked diligently to achieve this enhancement of the role of back-benchers and to establish a better climate in Parliament as a result of some of the rules which have been accepted.

I would be remiss not to remind the Government House Leader that there are still some recommendations outstanding. Precisely, some are before the Board of Internal Economy, and the Speaker is very much aware of them. Although we have gone through a major step in the right direction, I hope the Government will not consider that the work is completed and will indeed pursue some of the other recommendations to facilitate better the work of Members of Parliament.

Some of the outstanding issues could certainly be dealt with under the chairmanship of the Hon. Member for Peace River (Mr. Cooper), who is the chairman of a committee which could look at some aspects of Parliament, and under the chairmanship of the Hon. Member for Saint Denis (Mr. Prud'homme) who is the chairman of another committee which could look at other aspects. In terms of modernizing our operations, televising the proceedings of committees and introducing electronic voting in Parliament, those are matters which are now before the Board of Internal Economy. Although we are dealing with some of the rules, it would be