

I admit that it was not possible to continue with the committee of supply where estimates would be brought into this House and each member would have the right to address his grievance and hold up the estimates. That system had to change because our country was becoming more complex, and that was the argument that favoured having estimates referred to committees. However, there has to be some means of reinforcing the committee structure so that departments of government, ministers and their public servants will know that when they go before those committees with their estimates they will not only have to explain those estimates but they will have to be accountable for the expenditures of the previous year. If they do not adequately explain their estimates and if they cannot account for the expenditures of the previous year they should be aware they could be penalized by the House.

Unless you have that discipline then the structure falls down and will not work. I hope that with the passage of this bill and with the establishment of the post of comptroller general in the next parliament we will get around to addressing this problem. As a matter of fact, I know we will because the next Parliament of Canada will be led by a Progressive Conservative government, and our leader has committed himself to making parliament more relevant and to restructuring the committees of the House, giving them a support staff and an ongoing investigative role.

That is the problem that we as a House addressed ourselves to in the last session when we referred this matter to the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization. We in that committee came up with a consensus in a number of areas, including a restructuring of the committee system. For example, we proposed the expenditures committee which would function parallel to the Public Accounts Committee on an ongoing basis and would be able to call any department at any given time to examine any aspect of that department's expenditures throughout the year. That is a reform that is long overdue and whose time has come. I am very proud to be able to say to this House that these reforms will in fact be put into effect in the next parliament of Canada because there will be a change of government in this country.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pinard:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier):** The hon. Parliamentary Secretary on a point of order.

**Mr. Pinard:** Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) accept a question?

[English]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier):** Order, please. Would the hon. member for St. John's East accept a question from the parliamentary secretary to the House leader?

**Mr. McGrath:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

*Financial Administration Act*

[Translation]

**Mr. Pinard:** Mr. Speaker, I have great respect for the hon. member and I should like to know whether the three reports prepared by the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization were supposed to be submitted to the respective caucus of each party. Moreover, could he confirm to the House whether his party caucus did in fact ratify these three reports, because his party has never indicated its concurrence in these reports. We on this side would have liked to ratify them, too, a lot sooner, because we have long been in favour of a complete reform of the House procedures. I can assure the hon. member that this type of reform is quite acceptable to the government side.

[English]

**Mr. McGrath:** I am very pleased to respond to the question of my colleague, the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader, an hon. gentleman for whom I have the greatest respect. However, he poses the question out of ignorance. I say that in sorrow because he was not the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader during the last session of parliament, although I do believe he was a member of the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization.

**Mr. Pinard:** I was.

**Mr. McGrath:** He served well. The report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization, containing the three packages that the hon. member refers to, did not get back into this House because of the stubbornness, the intransigence and the bullishness of his colleague, the government House leader. He refused to go along with the concessions that we made as an opposition because he felt the government would have to give too much. For our part, we were prepared to make compromises. As my colleague the House leader for the opposition indicates, we were prepared to make concessions and go a long way. The government was not prepared to do so because it did not at that particular time fit in with the House strategy of the government House leader, and regretfully the committee's work was allowed to die with the session.

**Mr. Pinard:** Will you answer my question, please?

**Mr. McGrath:** I have already answered the question, Mr. Speaker. I told the hon. member that there was a consensus in my party that we were prepared to make concessions, and that government was not prepared to accept because they felt they were giving too much.

**Mr. Pinard:** You did not let us know.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier):** The hon. member for Ottawa West on a point of order.

**Mr. Francis:** I would like to ask a question of the hon. member. I endeavoured to ask one in the course of his speech.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier):** Would the hon. member for St. John's East permit a question from the hon. member for Ottawa West?