

Transport and Communications

debate will affect the practice we follow in this house. It is true that when a private member puts down a private member's motion he must be very careful about the wording he uses. This arises from the inhibitions placed upon private members when it comes to proposing motions which in any way touch on the financial prerogative of the Crown. Constitutionally these rest exclusively on the shoulders of the government. This I suggest is the only reason for the limitation.

I did not have much time this morning, Mr. Speaker, but I happen to have copies in my office of several reports of previous committees. I have here the report of the joint committee on Indian affairs, 1960-61. Listen to the recommendations made at that time.

The Indian Act should be amended to formally recognize lawful possession of land held by an Indian for twenty years and also to permit band councils to allocate land on a conditional basis.

Again:

As the present provisions of Section 88 of the Act bar many Indians from ordinary sources of credit, the section should be amended to permit individual Indians to waive the protection afforded as regards their personal property; and band revenue funds should be subject to attachment in respect of judgments for damages—

And so on. Further:

Sections 32 and 33 of the Indian Act relating to the sale or barter of produce from reserves in the three prairie provinces should be deleted.

I have also found a report of the Special Committee on Food and Drugs which dealt with certain questions in 1963. Here is one of the recommendations which were made:

That the Pest Control Act be amended to prevent the importation of pesticides not registered under the Act, from a country outside of Canada.

Here, in the first two books I looked at, are four specific recommendations of committees of this house concerning amendments to existing statutes, and they are set out in far more specific and definite terms than is the report of the committee on transport which is the subject matter of this debate. A detailed examination of committee reports would disclose many more. In the case we are considering, the wording used is simply "Your committee recommends. . ."

The word "recommends" may mean a lot of things to different people, Mr. Speaker, but I have had a chance to look at the dictionary and I think a fairly common understanding of it would be "to commend to the favourable attention of, or to counsel as a course of action." The words are used in the report in

the context of this meaning. It does not constitute a direction to the government. It is, rather, a suggestion that it take into account the recommendations of the committee with regard to a serious and particular matter.

In this context I ask whether committees are to be prohibited in the future from making reports containing a recommendation to the house and to the government that certain statutes be changed? I am not speaking about a direction, or about any integral part of the proposal to amend or repeal legislation, but of a proposal by way of counsel or advice that the government should do so.

I submit with deference that no case has been made for the contention put forward from the other side of the house. I shall sum up on one further issue, this time going somewhat beyond the terms of the objections raised by the President of the Privy Council. We are now engaged in this house in dealing with a new set of rules. We have placed on the shoulders of committees the burden of doing a great deal of the work which was formerly done in the house, the house no longer having time to deal in detail with a great many complex and difficult subjects. This system will fail, as it is failing now, if the government takes the course of raising shoddy and petty points of order and obstruction to prevent committees from doing the kind of work they should be doing, if the new system is to succeed.

Merely because hon. gentlemen opposite are refugees from the stone age who clutter up the treasury benches, masquerading as Liberals, and who are not prepared to go along with the rest of us in accomplishing the work of reform and progress needed to be done if this house is to carry out the business assigned to it, does not mean that Your Honour should agree with them. If committees are to function, then this continual placing of obstacles in their path merely because they have not done what the government wanted them to do will reduce the whole thing to rubble and waste. I suggest that Your Honour should take judicial notice of that fact when you come to a decision on the point of order which has been raised by the President of the Privy Council.

• (3:30 p.m.)

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, one cannot expect that the debate on this point of order will sustain the same amount of interest that was shown in the debate on the earlier question of privilege,