

Supply

Mr. Simmons: First, he asked why the Tories should give up an Opposition day for foreign policy. Why, indeed? If they do not think foreign policy is important, then they should not give up a day. I always understood that those debates were put down on important issues. If Hon. Members opposite believe foreign policy is important, let them use an Opposition day to debate it. They cannot have it both ways. It is the old Tory tactic again, however—the old business of trying to have their cake and eat it too. Having said that—

Mr. Taylor: The cake is always above the table, never under it.

Mr. Simmons: —I assure my good friend from St. John's East, who has just come into the Chamber, that my notes clearly reflect the following.

Mr. Taylor: You have notes? You needed notes to make this speech?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The Hon. Member for Burin-St. George's has the floor.

Mr. Simmons: Mr. Speaker, I want to say to my good friend from St. John's East that I felt he made several excellent observations and constructive suggestions for change. Indeed, his colleague from Yukon could take a page out of his book. I would say the same thing for the hon. gentleman for Bow River, but that would require some ability—

Mr. Taylor: Whatever we say will be above the table, not sneaking around. I won't be full of hatred.

Mr. Simmons: I want to say to the Hon. Member for St. John's East that it was a real pleasure to work with him on committee and it continues to be a pleasure. Unlike some Tories I know, he has the ability, learned over long years in this Chamber, to put his partisanship aside sometimes, as he did in this debate today—

Mr. Taylor: I wish you would follow his example.

Mr. Simmons: —and to come before the committee on parliamentary reform with some constructive ideas. It has been an absolute pleasure to work with him, the Hon. Member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker), and several other Members who are not in the House.

Mr. Taylor: Why don't you follow their example?

Mr. Simmons: I share the guarded optimism which the Hon. Member for St. John's East brought to the debate this morning. There was a constructive tone to his remarks. If I may paraphrase his remarks roughly, he said he is not very happy with many things he has seen in the House. I agree with him on that. Then he said in effect, "I believe there is some hope if we do this and this and this." The ideas expressed here this morning, he and I and others have already expressed in the parliamentary reform committee, and I expect in time many of these ideas will come forward by way of recommendations from that committee to this Chamber for implementation.

• (1540)

I want to make one other point to the Hon. Member for St. John's East. The Hon. Member made much of the fact that certain of the reports of the committee had not been concurred in. I am not disturbed about that particular issue because I understood that what was really needed in this House we already have, that is, a concurrence on those measures which were proposed on an interim basis. We have concurrence on that and we are working under those interim arrangements for the balance of this calendar year. In the meantime, we have literally many months in which to address the issue of whether we will concur in the subsequent reports which will come forward from that committee. Therefore, I would say to that Hon. Member that I am not particularly concerned that the House has not seen fit at this point in time to concur in those reports, although I would say to him that if he is really concerned about the issue, as I believe him to be, he should talk to the interim Leader of the Opposition because in many of these matters, I understand from our Government House Leader, we are waiting for the signal from the Tory Opposition House Leader so that we can seek concurrence in several of those reports.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, would the Hon. Member for Burin-St. George's (Mr. Simmons) be prepared, as a Government supporter, to take the initiative and move concurrence in the fifth and sixth reports? He can forget the fourth report dealing with the speakership, but the fifth report and sixth report are critical to what we have already done. Is he prepared to move concurrence and test the House? That is the true test. It is not whether or not Members opposite are waiting for a signal from us. The initiative has to come from the Government.

Mr. Simmons: Mr. Speaker, I say to my friend, the Hon. Member for St. John's East, that that would certainly be the "grandstand" thing to do. I have never been known for a lot of grandstanding. I would rather await the process. If this were the end of the calendar year and we were coming close to the new year in which we would have to revert to the old rules or anticipate some new ones, then I could see the urgency of doing something and I would be urging the Hon. Member to get up and move a private resolution, or I would think about doing it myself, for that matter. What I am saying now is that we have six months before the end of the year and certainly in that time either the interim Leader of the Opposition and the Government House Leader, or the successor, the gentleman from St. John's West, next week, will be able to do that. Perhaps the individual from Baie Comeau, Antigonish, or whoever becomes the Leader of the Party will be able to do it. However, I say to the Hon. Member that I see the need for a change because I participated in the committee proceedings which recommended that change. I do not see the need for a stampede. It is going to be a number of months before the interim rules run out in terms of the sunset clause on them and in that time, surely, we can get heads together, the new Leader of the Opposition with the Government House Leader.