

*Procedure Committee Report*

that a maximum of 20 days will be spent in committee of supply in this chamber, surely we are right there tightening up the time that parliament needs to spend on supply. Similarly, is there any reason in relation to other matters—not supply but regular government bills—that we cannot, once we get this system going, develop over a period of time certain time limits on debate on matters which have been thoroughly discussed in committee? That surely will be one of the next important steps we will take, whereby if we really make the most effective use of our committee we will perhaps be able, as we are with supply, to have generous limitations on debate when government bills come back to the house.

**Mr. Churchill:** Would the hon. member permit a question?

**Miss Jewett:** Yes.

**Mr. Churchill:** When the hon. member speaks about matters being thoroughly discussed in committees, what proof will the house have that they have been thoroughly discussed in committees?

**Miss Jewett:** I think this is something that we will have to determine as we go along. I assume that one reason we have not yet, as a committee of procedure, given final consideration to the whole idea of limiting our debates in this house is that we will have to see to what extent the committees do an effective job of discussing bills while they are before the committees. We have no proof ahead of time that this will work. All I am suggesting is that we move toward trying to see whether we cannot make it work; and if we do reorganize our committees and refer not only estimates but government bills to those committees, and if we do find that these bills are getting effective discussion and airing in committee sessions, then we can come to the point of saying that perhaps it is time we created some time limits on debates in the chamber itself. It is all part of a development which could take place. There is no guarantee of course that it will; but that is no reason why we should not at least give it a try. Therefore the proposal, to my mind at any rate, that eventually we may very well be able to have these adjournments of the house as well as our regular recesses, because we will have made more efficient not only the operation of our committees but the operation of the house itself, is a valid one.

The fear has been expressed that it would be impossible, if we adjourned the house periodically, ever to get government business through the house; that there simply would

not be enough time. This may be a very legitimate argument. However, I was looking through the amount of time spent on various aspects of government business and I noted that about the same amount of time over the years is spent on main estimates as is spent on government bills. In the first session of the 24th parliament in 1958, 28 per cent of the government's time was spent on main estimates while 34 per cent was spent on government bills. In the second session in 1959, 30 per cent was spent on main estimates and 26 per cent on government bills. So even more time was spent on main estimates in that session than on government bills. In the third session, 1960, 30 per cent of government time was spent on main estimates as compared with 25 per cent on government bills. So, more often than not, more time has been spent in the house on main estimates than has been spent on government bills. Without going into any further statistics, it seems likely that if we reduce the amount of time to 20 days on main estimates, even with the adjournment concept we will have abundant time to deal with necessary government legislation.

However, may I say that the committee is not wedded to these specific periodic adjournments recommended in the report. I think that most of us on the committee are hopeful only that the house would give its approval in principle to the concept presented here, as well as to the proposed committee structure. Then we would go ahead in the committee with specific proposals which would come up later, to be discussed and debated and accepted or rejected by this house.

**Mr. Churchill:** Does the hon. member object to another question? I do not like interrupting her, but if she does not mind: When she was giving a comparison of the time spent on main estimates and the time spent on government bills, was she intending to suggest that the estimates were not of the same importance as legislation?

**Miss Jewett:** Not at all, Mr. Speaker. It was just my way of showing that roughly the same amount of time had been spent on each. When we use our committees more effectively for main estimates we will, by reducing the time to 20 days in the house, leave more time for government bills. So I am sure there will be more than 20 days—that is, more than the same amount of time—spent on government bills. It will leave more time for government bills if the proposal on estimates is accepted; that is all I intended by that