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what it is today. It is more than a place which by rote or by parade automatically supports every government measure on one side of the House and the other side of the House is opposed to every government measure.

The paper that I had the privilege to table in 1979 had as a fundamental principle that it was in keeping with the basic principles of parliamentary government to see in the House of Commons a more aggressive representation of the voters. That was the purpose of it. But while this process was going on over the years—and it was allowed to happen, and it was forced to happen in 1969 by the use of closure—governments occupied more and more of the time, and Parliament therefore came under the thumb of government to a greater and greater degree.

What these reforms are designed to do, and what is needed in this Parliament, is not to denude government of its power, enormous as it is, but to leaven that bread of power with the ability in this Parliament to hold government accountable, to provide the tools to Parliament, not just to the opposition, Mr. Speaker, but to Parliament, to hold the government accountable.

The government House leader said he would be prepared to throw a challenge out, to agree to 20-minute speeches. This is just not a House leaders' matter, but I imagine there would be general agreement in the House of Commons. I believe there would also be agreement in the House of Commons to a counter-challenge that I might throw to him: as an experiment, try the idea of independent references for committees that are set forth in this paper. If the House leaders are to discuss this—that is his suggestion—then let them discuss that as well, and I wager that there will be agreement among the private members of this House of Commons for that kind of change in our procedure.

You, Mr. Speaker, who occupy the chair now, chair the Standing Committee on Transport; and I say to you, Sir, that you are respected as the chairman of that committee. I will tell you the difference between our system and what should be in place in keeping with the parliamentary system, and it has to do with the tragedy of the *Ocean Ranger*. Parliament wanted to look at that matter. It was within the ambit of authority of the transport committee to look at it. Instead, a royal commission is looking at it. Yet I saw on public broadcasting in the United States the maritime committee of the Congress of the United States investigating a tragedy that occurred off the shores of Canada that involved to a greater part the loss of Canadians lives. And yet, if it wanted to, Parliament could not investigate that unless the government gave its go ahead to investigate.

● (1730)

I think it is a departure from what people think is the role of this place when that happens in our Parliament. As a member, I am prepared to trade the length of speeches as well as many other things if, on the other side of the scale, the government is prepared to make a trade with respect to accountability. I believe that this view is shared by all members in all parties of

the House. We have been asking for that for years and that is the purpose of this motion.

Why do we ask the government to consider these reforms? Why do we ask the government to make a reference to the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization? The reason is that Parliament is not just the place of House leaders, nor is it just the place of party leaders alone. It belongs to all members in the sense that here is where we function. The way in which members can express themselves on the operations of Parliament is through the work of the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization. It is made up of members from all parties.

We have proven in the House that committees will work when there is good will. I believe in this House when you cut through all the partisanship that exists here—even though it is legitimate in part—you find a feeling of frustration and anger among members on all sides of the House, anger and frustration that this place is not working as they thought it should when they came here as members.

As the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) said, there is very little opportunity for input into public policy. There seems to be a feeling that all the wisdom is with the government, regardless of its stripe, or with the bureaucracy, when we know that it is not. Elected politicians can bring an overlay of wisdom to government decisions. Certainly this place is not here for the convenience of the government. It is here to pry, probe and question the actions of a government regardless of what government is in office or whether the Member of Parliament who is questioning is a Liberal, Conservative or New Democrat.

The advantage of sending this proposal and all others which were mentioned by the government House leader to a committee is that it will become evident that this place is not just the preserve of the members. It is also the preserve of the public because it also has views to express on how this place performs and whether it is functioning as it expects. Members of the public cannot come to the bar of the House to speak or sit in these benches to speak, but they can come and speak to the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization. That is the reason for committees, and you will recall that one of the issues in the energy security matter was that the public should come to speak.

There are countless organizations, not all academic, which are concerned about the operation of this place. There are business organizations, such as the Business Council on National Issues, which are worried about how this place is operating. James Gillies, who was the member for Don Valley East, wrote a book about the involvement of business, and the private sector in the political process.

I suggest that it is time for the public to become involved in the political process. It will only get involved on a day to day basis if the balance changed—not the delicate balance referred to by the government House leader in his speech to the federal lawyers club in November, but the gross imbalance which exists in the House of Commons between the weight of the government on one side and the influence of the private member on the other.