

*Motion for Concurrence in Report*

The method advocated in the report of the committee on procedure, namely the setting up of a proceedings committee made up of a representative of each party in the House of Commons, might provide a reasonable period of time which will certainly be more extended than limited, at each of the stages of the various measures the house is called upon to consider.

There is no doubt that with some common sense hon. members of the various parties can agree in most cases and set up beforehand a sensible and realistic program taking into account the nature and the importance of bills to come.

But we must consider another possibility. What happens when one or more than one member, in a committee, cannot agree on the consideration of a given legislation?

It was suggested to leave that question in abeyance and rely on the common sense of members, or else let the debate follow its course. In my opinion, this is neither realistic nor practical. In that case, it normally and conditionally behaves, not one person but the majority of the elected representatives of the people, to decide on the course of action. It has been said that this would be tantamount to closure. It is understandable that this house, contrary to parliaments in other democratic countries of importance which have never known such a procedure, can entertain doubts on the possible effects of such a course, and I submit that the fact of providing for a reasonable allocation of time for a particular debate does not deny the right of discussion, but it is actually an effort to avoid the needless repetition of the same arguments solely put forward to postpone a decision and upset the entire legislative program of the government instead of informing the people.

There is a difference between knowing in advance that a certain number of days will be allotted for the consideration of bills and an untimely termination as a result of the application of closure before any objection or suggestion has been made. The allocation of a definite period of time will not prevent a constructive and partisan debate, but on the contrary, it will encourage the member to use efficiently the time provided. The debate will merely be more concise and specific, rather than being long and repetitious. It is obvious that during each session in the recent past, an important part of the anticipated legislation died on the order paper, due to the lack of time to present and consider it. Therefore, in my opinion, we can only conclude

from experience that a modern parliament adjusted to national needs, operating in a regularly, constructive and efficient way, must have a procedure for the planning of parliamentary business during the session, as is done elsewhere, without infringing on the basic rights of parliament and hon. members.

Mr. Speaker, the chairman of our committee on procedure in a masterly speech explained the main recommendations included in the report and I do not intend to reconsider them. I should like to speak briefly of the increasing importance of the standing committees of the house and of the need to reorganize them in such a way that they will be able to carry out their task and contribute in a positive and efficient way to the work of parliament.

• (4:30 p.m.)

Members of the house, and particularly back-benchers, who are often frustrated because they cannot participate enough in the preparation and consideration of bills and in the examination of estimates, will be able to make use of their talents and take an active part in discussions on subjects which they know well and which interest them. They will be able to do so, moreover, in more favourable circumstances than in committee of the whole; they will be able to discuss specific points and obtain answers and information from the ministers concerned and their officials.

Estimates will be referred to the appropriate standing committees, which will be able to examine them in advance and in detail. Moreover, the opposition will also have about 28 days, during three predetermined periods of time, in which to raise specific questions of its choice in the house, and the option of presenting six motions of non-confidence in the government on questions which it will choose itself or resulting from the reports of the standing committees. Parliament will therefore be able to control more adequately the administrative and legislative activities of the government.

All bills, except those derived from money resolutions or ways and means resolutions and those which the house has decided to stand, will be referred to the standing committees for detailed study before being reported back to the house. I think we need well-organized committees which will have enough time to study the measures submitted to them. This will probably require periodic adjournments of the business of the house, as was suggested in the conclusions of