

sometimes in our hands, as honourable senators know, not more than an hour or even half an hour before parliament is due to prorogue.

Ever since I have been leader of the government I have been faced with the contention that this house is not given sufficient time to consider important measures, including bills that could not be classified as money bills. I think that in one respect we have overcome the handicap under which the Senate formerly laboured. I refer to the reference of the estimates at the last session or two to our Finance Committee, before the bills based on those estimates have reached this house. Honourable senators know full well that this committee has done such excellent work that when we have got the Supply Bills we have found ourselves thoroughly acquainted with their details.

Honourable senators, the suggestion I now wish to make to you, and which is embodied in the motion, is that this principle of dealing with legislative measures in anticipation, which we have applied to Supply Bills, be extended to other major pieces of legislation that we are forewarned of in the Speech from the Throne. Too often we have no opportunity for studying measures of this kind until the very last part of the session. I am suggesting that, in order to provide the necessary machinery, we change the size of and our procedure with respect to six of our committees. The standing committees which I would propose changing are the following: Transport and Communications, Finance, External Relations, Natural Resources, Canadian Trade Relations and Immigration and Labour. I would leave as they are the committees on the Library, Printing and the Restaurant, Standing Orders, Banking and Commerce, Miscellaneous Private Bills, Internal Economy and Contingent Accounts, Tourist Traffic, Debates and Reporting, Divorce, Public Health and Welfare, Civil Service Administration of Public Buildings and Grounds.

I would suggest that for the present my motion apply to only three committees. If the new system is satisfactory, when the house sees fit, the other three committees may be included.

The memberships of certain committees have varied from time to time, ranging from a high of fifty to a low of nine. When I came to this house three of its standing committees, namely, those on Canadian Trade Relations, Natural Resources, and Immigration and Labour, each had a membership of nine. I suggest that ultimately the six committees which I have specified should each have a maximum membership of seventeen, and that no one senator be appointed to more

than one of these committees. In that way seventeen senators will have the responsibility for the consideration of matters referred to any one of these committees. Exceptions would be made in the case of the leader of the government in the Senate and the leader opposite, both of whom would be *ex officio* members of the committees. Honourable senators may recall that the membership in some of the committees was increased at my suggestion. It is, however, my belief that they have, in some instances, become unwieldy.

If honourable senators agree to try out the proposals I have put forward, I assure the house that the changes will not necessarily be like the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not and cannot be recalled. In my opinion, the proposals have some merit, and, indeed, none of the senators with whom I discussed them had any serious objection.

I suggest that tomorrow morning we proceed to select the membership of the committees. True, the selection committee may not be able to make appointments that will be entirely satisfactory; nevertheless, such changes as appear necessary can be made later. Having set up the committees they should be organized, and a chairman elected to each.

After having consulted with these three committees to which I have made specific reference, I intend on Thursday next to refer certain important subjects which will be coming to us in the near future. To the Transport and Communications Committee, I propose to refer the report of the Royal Commission on Transportation. That means that the four pieces of legislation having to do with railways will be considered and studied by that committee. I need hardly say to honourable senators how perplexing and difficult is the problem of equalizing freight rates in Canada.

It is indeed a difficult problem, and has far-reaching consequences. I intend, therefore, to ask the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications to study, at its leisure, all the aspects of the legislation, and to report back to this house as to whether or not we should place on the legislation our seal of approval. I submit, honourable senators, that in following this method we would be following the system adopted for the study of the estimates prior to their arrival in this house.

Further, I propose to refer to the Standing Committee on External Relations, subject to consultation with that committee when it is set up, the bill which has been introduced having to do with the sending of Canadian troops overseas under NATO. This committee will be asked to study the question and