

Procedure Committee Report

be a mistake to put veterans affairs into another committee. This has been done in the past and it has been separated from the joint committee in the past. I think there should be a separate committee for veterans affairs. I would agree with him on that proposal.

Then, paragraph 12(e) of the report proposes a standing committee on delegated legislation. I am doubtful, myself, about the wisdom of setting up at this time a standing committee on delegated legislation, which is referred to as a watchdog committee. It may be that this eventually will be required. However, I point out that there is an inquiry going on now, a government inquiry, into federal administrative tribunals, and the powers given those tribunals by statute. There is an inquiry going on now into the desirability of setting up what is called an ombudsman. I hope that before any action is taken on a standing committee on delegated legislation there would be an opportunity to report on these inquiries. It is for this reason I feel perhaps this particular recommendation is a little premature.

There is a section in the report on the size of committees. I think these recommendations are good and I hope they will be adopted, except perhaps for the standing committee on agriculture. I doubt whether that committee should be restricted to 30 members, in view of the nature of the problems before it. I think perhaps that should be looked at again.

There is also the question of membership of committees. All I have to say about that is to express some mild reservations about the desirability of the recommendation in paragraph 17 which excludes the leader of the opposition, the chief government whip and the chief opposition whip from serving on committees. I wonder if that exclusion, if it is to be made at all, should be restricted to the leader and whip of one opposition party and not to all opposition parties, or if there should be any such exclusion of that kind.

So far as the section dealing with the chairmen of committees is concerned, I have some hesitation about the appointment and formation of a chairman's panel which is referred to in paragraph 20. I do not feel very strongly about it, but I am just wondering whether this might not be the introduction of a piece of machinery which would not accomplish the purposes the committee have in mind. I think I should like to have another look at it.

[Mr. Pearson.]

Now, Mr. Speaker, there is also a section dealing with the appointment of committees. I note in that section that committees should have the power to send for persons, papers and records, to report from time to time, to adjourn from place to place within Canada, to appoint subcommittees, etc. and to sit during the adjournment of the house or sit while the house is sitting. I can see some possible difficulties if committees are given these powers automatically to move around Canada at will. I would think perhaps that section should be looked at again.

Then, Mr. Speaker, we come to the very important section dealing with the meetings of committees which makes the imaginative, and at first sight to me, attractive proposal that we should sit for three weeks and have two weeks off. Perhaps that is not the right way to put it. Perhaps a better way of expression it would be to say that we should sit for three weeks and have committees in the intervening period for one week which would give members their chance to be in their constituencies one week out of four.

Mr. Knowles: One week out of five.

Mr. Pearson: Yes, one week out of five. I have a feeling that this proposal is a little too rigid, too inflexible for the proper discharge of parliamentary business. I believe, perhaps more than I did two years ago, in the desirability of getting out of this place occasionally. I would hope we would be able to build up a convention or parliamentary constitution by which we must have our Easter recess and we must have our summer recess. To lay it down as a rule that we should go on for three weeks in the house and then adjourn, so far as the house is concerned, for two weeks, may very well prove to have results which those who made the recommendation may not have contemplated. You may be within one day of the end of your three week period and you may come to the last section, the title, of the Canada pension bill. You may have only one day. You might spend all one day discussing whether the evidence had been printed in both languages in the right way. Then at the end of that day you go away for two weeks and come back again to the bill. When you did come back, with the second wind you get when you go back to your constituencies, you might start all over again debating the definition clause for another three weeks, and then off you go again for two more weeks.

Mr. Baldwin: You might find a new bill.