

*Procedure Committee Report*

Then it is stated that:

Mr. Pearson concludes that the changes, including the new practice of sending department estimates to the long existing standing committees in the various subject fields such as railways or fisheries, is a trend that has not altered "to any noticeable extent" the work of the Commons.

I assume there has been a change in the Prime Minister's attitude under the new politics from his attitude when he was leader of the opposition. I hope he feels that these recommendations are good, that he will eventually set up these estimates committees, and that they will have some effect. I assume that he feels the limit of 20 days on the consideration of estimates in the committee of supply will be an effective means of making sure there will be some safeguard regarding our criticism of the Diefenbaker administration, in respect of its attitude toward the estimates committee, to the effect that the time we spend considering estimates in that committee is wasted because we come right back to the house and spend just as much time again.

One thing that puzzles me and my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, really centres upon the fact that more people than just ourselves believe that parliament is in difficulty today, and that if the federal government is in trouble—and I am thinking in the wider sense—this is because the House of Commons has not been able to function in that way which most people demand of it in terms of efficiency. I think much of this criticism is exaggerated, but if this is a dilemma and if we are going to have the governing party going to the people in a few weeks with the cry that it must have a big majority in order to run parliament, because it is inefficient at the present time; or if we are going to have the Prime Minister parading across this country talking about new politics and the kind of reforms that we need in parliament, now is the time for the Prime Minister to place on the record those things he wants.

I can understand a certain shyness on the part of the Prime Minister and that he may not wish to be too pushy because, after all, this parliament is not functioning very well; but he should be the one to spot the difficulties and suggest the changes which are necessary, instead of just giving us these goody-goody words to the effect that we want more for members of parliament to do. What we need is a change suggested by the government which will give committees more power without allowing them to get in the way of the cabinet or the government. I look forward to hearing from the Prime Minister,

or some other spokesman for the government, in this regard at this time.

When I spent some time analysing the work of the committees the one overwhelming fact, confirmed time after time by quantitative analysis, which came to my attention was that the individuals who are active in committees are the same individuals who are active in the house. The ideal which has been suggested in the general recommendations is that everybody will be a member of a committee, and that there will be a balance. There are to be small committees which will have different routines of work.

In this regard one of the things we must realize is that a greater demand will be placed on certain members, not only in terms of attendance but in terms of performance and interest. I make this suggestion about the members who are active in the house being the members who are active in the committees not to annoy anyone but just to emphasize realities. I think all hon. members of this house will recognize this fact. There is an identity, if you will call it that, between the interest and background of hon. members and the subjects under discussion in the house or in committees which makes them active. That is my explanation of the situation.

I think one other reason there is perhaps less activity in committees than there might be is related to the fact that members feel there is little consequence or result in respect of work done by committees. Hon. members realize that estimates are going to be considered again in the house, and that is part of the reason for lack of interest. Perhaps another part of the reason is that little press attention is given to committees, or very little attention is paid to the recommendations in the committee reports.

Mr. Speaker, I think governments are less than honest at times about their attitude toward recommendations contained in reports of committees. This year we had a committee studying the Ottawa terminal railway bill. That bill suddenly disappeared and we heard nothing more of it. I can tell you the reason for that. It is because the committee in its wisdom adopted an amendment to the bill to the effect that two of the directors of this Ottawa terminal railway organization should be French speaking. Apparently the government is not prepared to accept that suggestion and has let the bill die. It is my understanding that we are not likely to have an Ottawa terminal railway organization but will be left with the same kind