

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, November 27, 1953

The house met at 2.30 p.m.

FLOODS

WINNIPEG—MEASURES FOR REDUCTION OF FLOOD HAZARD

Mr. Maurice Bourget (Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Public Works): On behalf of the Minister of Public Works I beg leave to table a report of an investigation into measures for the reduction of the flood hazard in the greater Winnipeg area, dated October 1, 1953, prepared by the Department of Resources and Development. Extra copies of this report are available in the distribution office.

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APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE

Right Hon. L. S. St. Laurent (Prime Minister) moved:

That a select committee to be designated be appointed to consider with Mr. Speaker the procedure of this house for the purpose of suggesting any changes that may be desirable to assure the more expeditious dispatch of public business, with power to send for persons and papers, and to report from time to time its findings and recommendations to the house.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I think it would be the desire of all members of the house to have our rules and standing orders such as to provide in the most efficient possible manner for the orderly conduct of our deliberations, and I think it is the general feeling that these rules might be considered by a committee of the house with you, sir, for the purpose of reporting to the house whether or not in their opinion there are any of these rules that it would be desirable to modify for the sake of the orderly conduct of the business of the house.

I understand that the matter has been discussed with the leaders of the other groups in the house and that it is generally considered that it would be desirable to have a committee set up that would study with you the rules as they exist and then report to the house whether or not in their opinion there are modifications that it would be desirable to introduce. It is for the purpose of providing an opportunity for such study

that this motion has been put on the order paper and that I now submit it for the consideration of the house.

Hon. George A. Drew (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support this motion. It provides for a committee similar to that which has been appointed on other occasions. Some useful results have followed from the discussions of that committee, but I should think that most hon. members would agree that the committee has not yet gone as far as would be wished in regard to expediting the business of the house, and in assuring a procedure which will use, to the greatest possible advantage, the time that is spent here.

In supporting the motion I do stress my own opinion that the expeditious handling of business will not be related nearly so much to any limitation of time on speeches or anything of that kind as it will to some orderly method of presenting business and setting up committees at the earliest possible stage and giving to these committees full power to examine and to report without limitation except such as may be imposed by the ordinary rules of secrecy or propriety.

Furthermore, I think that much could be accomplished in considering ways in which the estimates can be better examined. I am not suggesting for one moment that it is a sin of one party more than another, but over the years the practice that has developed of delaying the handling of extremely important estimates until late in the session, after the date of closing has been generally understood, reduces the real consideration of subjects that perhaps come up for consideration only in that way. I make these observations because I believe that as members of parliament we should in every way possible try to avoid the impression, which undoubtedly has been created in the minds of the public, that large sums are voted without adequate consideration. Speaking as Leader of the Opposition, I would like to see a method which would afford us in advance an opportunity to obtain much more complete information than is represented by single figures on a page of estimates.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, we too are glad to support this motion setting up once again a select committee to consider the rules of