

S. O. 31

access to the elected members who are going back to their ridings one week out of the month.

So, I am hoping that the new process will just simply be superior. I am prepared to live under it even if I were in opposition. I think it will be good.

Mr. Brewin: What does it do to the committees?

Mr. Thacker: I think the standing committees will now spend their time on the policy issues trying to have input to the bills before they actually are proposed in the House. A Standing Committee on Agriculture will take up some of these controversial questions, will make proposals that a government would be foolish to reject because it reflects the good work of all three committees.

Mr. Brewin: Just like it was foolish to reject the CSIS report.

Mr. Thacker: Absolutely. My friend is absolutely correct. I think governments are foolish when they reject the committee reports, but my experience has been that those committee reports ultimately work their way into the public policy.

Then we have the legislative committees that will spend more of their time on the specific technical details of the bill. Whereas now what is happening is when a bill goes before a committee, the committee gets in witnesses who are speaking really to the principle of the bill and to other broad policy issues that are not related to that bill. I think that is a waste of our time. I think it is a waste of money and it does not really change the bill that is before the committee at that stage.

I have to say to you, all things considered, I believe this package is worthy of our support. I am happy to stand and support this bill. I know the members of the opposition will probably not be able to stand and support it, but I know, having spent many years in opposition, that I bet you if you could poll them privately, if you could search their minds so to speak, we would find that a lot of them are in agreement with the vast bulk of these changes.

I think, because I am prepared to live with it if I were in opposition, that it should be good reason for many other members to come to the same conclusion. The opposition should take a longer term view and support

this package, although I realize they will not for narrow partisan reasons. I suppose, if I were sitting there, I would not either.

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, I listened, with interest, to the hon. member's speech and particularly the comment that he made about the longer hours that the House is sitting. He suggested that members of the opposition somehow opposed these because they did not want to work harder. I could see his tongue sticking out the side of his cheek almost at that point. He knows that the opposition in this House is extremely hard working and very diligent in its duties. I am sure that he knows that the five additional hours a week that the government has thrown into the sittings of the House are really not designed to make the House work harder. What they are designed to do is make up additional time for government business because it is taking away so much of the time by cutting 40 days from the sittings of the House.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Order, please. It being two o'clock, the House will now hear Members' Statements pursuant to Standing Order 31.

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S.O. 31

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL SOIL CONSERVATION WEEK

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, the purpose of National Soil Conservation Week from April 8 to 14 is to make all Canadians aware of the importance of soil conservation.

This is a unique opportunity to encourage farmers to ensure sustained economic growth for their farm while they improve and safeguard the quality of the soil.

The federal-provincial national soil conservation program, with a \$150-million budget, offers farmers financial and technical assistance to adopt soil conservation methods.

Mr. Speaker, farmers from all over the country have successfully adopted various practices: green-manure crops, field windbreaks, grassed waterways, extended