

the Bill. Therefore, a very drastic form of closure will be imposed on a piece of legislation simply because of the will of a Minister. I think that is unprecedented and very dangerous.

I am not saying that the Government should not find better ways of dealing with legislation. I am not saying that the Government should not have the right legitimately to expect that its legislation be accepted, but the way it is proceeding is, to me, frightening.

I also want to say that there is no *quid pro quo* in the proposals submitted by the Government. Time and time again, the Opposition Whip has asked a question which was nicely received by the Government Whip but was not answered. Under our current rules, we need only 20 Members to have a quorum. To ask the Opposition to have 25 Members present in the House of Commons in order to prevent the Government from prolonging the debate at the end of the day and making sure that the legislation that normally would not be accepted is passed is asking too much of the Opposition. There are 40 Members of the Loyal Opposition. This means that in order to prevent the Government from speeding up the process of passage of legislation, we would need to have 25 opposition Members present.

As you know, Madam Speaker, parliamentarians are asked to do many tasks. They are asked to be in here, to be in committee, to be in their constituencies and to represent the interests of their Parties at numerous meetings here and abroad. Therefore, it is impossible to ask an Opposition that is as small as we are to block the dictatorial will of 210 Members. Certainly the Government must come to its senses and use more appropriate numbers which would allow the Opposition to prevent unlimited debate on legislation.

I would like to deal with the proposals for Private Members' Bills. I know that through the good auspices of the Clerk of the Table, it is now possible to allow a substitute for an Hon. Member who cannot debate his Bill. The Clerk is now in a position to ask for other Members of the House to substitute for the Member who cannot be present and a different Bill can be looked at at the end of the day. The reality is, however, that if this fails, the one hour goes back to the Government. It should not go back to the Government.

The Government has enough time to look at its own affairs, and I think it is unfair to give Private Members' time to the Government. I do hope that the rules in this regard will make it crystal clear that if for one reason or another a Member is unable to deal with his Private Member's initiative, the time that would normally be given to Private Members' hour will not be given back to the Government. This is not asking too much and I believe that in the interests of Private Members, it is very important.

I would like to say something about a recommendation that is not very controversial but one which I believe is important. Both the McGrath and the Lefebvre committees opposed any nomination process for the Chair. All Members except those

Standing Orders

who wish to withdraw from consideration should be eligible to receive ballots.

As was seen in the election of the present Speaker, campaigning is resented by most Hon. Members and is seen as inappropriate. The present system is intended to foster thought and discussion by MPs on the selection of the new Speaker. By having to declare themselves to be candidates, it is clear that the House could be deprived, as it almost was on the last occasion, of the candidature of a Member who is not willing to declare himself. The process should be more subtle than a declaration of candidacy. The character of the election does not lend itself to a horse race.

The Standing Committee on Elections, Privileges and Procedure has also recommended that the election process be improved by removing low-ranking nominees who receive less than a certain percentage of the votes. I think this is reasonable and I am glad the Government is willing to accept it. However, by inviting declarations, the House might see persons running for reasons other than the desire to seek the speakership. I think this is a step backward. I suggest that this proposal be reviewed by the Government and not be put forward for implementation. I think it will not be helpful in the election of the Speaker.

The major thrust of the McGrath report was the theme of increasing the influence of Members of Parliament. I am not saying it was to increase the powers of Members of Parliament. The House of Commons does not govern. It is clear that Ministers of the Crown are responsible to the House for the Government of Canada. However, there has always been what Edward Blake called the great power of the House to advise. This is the area which may be of direct interest to persons who must deal regularly with Government and who may have ideas about how to do things better. Clearly, if we are to implement the rules the Government wants to implement, Ministers are going to become very, very powerful. They are going to dictate the agenda and there will be absolutely no possibility of Members of the House, Opposition or Government, intervening to improve the legislation.

• (1640)

The McGrath committee had in mind improving the rules of the House of Commons to give more power to Members in reviewing legislation and Estimates in committee. To a certain degree we are doing that, but to a larger degree we are short of implementing all of the McGrath report recommendations. I certainly regret that three recommendations, one for an electronic voting system, another for the establishment of an appropriate small secretariat to support the activity of the Board of Internal Economy, and one regarding televising the work of committees, were not accepted.

Although everything has not been accepted by the Government, I think the gist of the recommendations of the McGrath report which have been implemented temporarily should now be made permanent. The desire of the Government to do differently should not be entertained at this time. Therefore, I