

debate the procedural admissibility of the report of the standing committee, concurrence cannot be moved today. It can only be moved on an allocated day, as I said earlier, according to the provisions of Standing Order 58(16).

● (1230)

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** It is an allotted day.

**Mr. Reid:** I should have said allotted day, I beg your pardon. Those provisions in the Standing Orders have not been taken advantage of by members of the opposition and, therefore, we have not had an opportunity to debate reports on estimates in the limited way in which I have described. Even if Your Honour may find that the motion to concur in the third report of the Transport Committee is in order and can be debated, I would argue that it cannot be debated today. According to the Standing Order, that matter should be debated on an allotted day and not on a day set aside for government business. I would even go further. If Your Honour should find, as I would argue, that members cannot, under routine proceedings, move motions to concur in reports of standing committees on estimates, I would argue that that can only be done in accordance with the terms of Standing Order 58 itself.

The third report of the Special Committee on Procedure in 1968 dealt with this matter when it dealt with the proposed reforms in supply procedures. At page 431 of the *Journals of the House of Commons for December 6, 1968* one reads as follows:

... It is envisaged that during the latter weeks of a session these days would be used frequently for debating the reports on the departmental estimates presented by the various Standing Committees.

I point out that of the 25 opposition days in a session, five are called in the first term, seven in the second term and the rest in the third term. Spending our time debating matters raised on opposition days has put great pressure on the business of the House.

**Mr. Stanfield:** What business?

**Mr. Reid:** However, the opposition has not, until now, made references to the estimates, as it is perfectly entitled to do and as it was intended by the authors of the report that opposition parties and opposition members should do. I think if opposition parties were to put into operation these particular parts of Standing Order 58 to which I have referred, a great deal of the frustration of hon. members on both sides of the House would, as I think was very well put by the hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow), be alleviated since they would have an opportunity to discuss the over-all operation of any particular department. That, as I say, would go some distance to alleviating much of the frustration which members and backbenchers on both sides of the House feel.

I emphasize that Your Honour's ruling on this question will have a great deal to do with the way in which the House will see its way clear to give debating time to opposition members and backbenchers. It will affect the work of the procedure committee on the operation of the question period and other elements of procedure associated with it.

### *Transport and Communications*

Another point which I must raise has to do with the substance of what is contained in the report of the standing committee. I draw to Your Honour's attention the third report of the committee, particularly the substantive matter in that report, as recorded in *Votes and Proceedings of May 24, 1973*. The substance of the report is as follows:

Your Committee recommends that the Government consider the advisability of making available to this Committee the report on the upgrading of the Port of Churchill.

Your Committee recommends that the Government consider the advisability of undertaking immediately a complete program for improving and upgrading the Port of Churchill including dredging, wharf, grain handling and grain storage facilities.

Speaking as a westerner, I am in sympathy with the point of view that led to the writing of that report. However, we must consider what the effect would be, in a legislative sense, if the House of Commons were to adopt such reports. I think it may be argued that if the House were to adopt such a report, the position would be that the House would be directing the government as to expenditures. It has been the long standing practice of the House of Commons that, before provisions for the expenditures of the people's money are enacted, there must be a royal recommendation and there must be a motion moved by a minister of the Crown.

The other point I wish to make concerns the consideration of these motions under routine proceedings. The number of motions for concurrence in committee reports, as at present on the order paper, has been described as a time bomb ready to go off. If hon. members can stand in their place and, at their leisure, move motions for concurrence of committee reports dealing with estimates, the effect would be that we should take away from the government its proper control over the business of the House and spend our time debating proper recommendations or reports of standing committees. Clearly, in such an event the House of Commons would be bound to deal not with the business of the day as put forward by the government but, rather, with the business of the day as put forward by standing committees, which are subagencies of the House of Commons and subservient to it. This question must also be considered.

Those are the main points I wished to raise. I wish to reserve my right to debate the operation of Standing Order 58, as that affects the reports of standing committees. I suggest to Your Honour again that the referral of estimates to standing committees is a limited matter. Such reference is a very strict reference, and when the consideration of estimates was transferred from the committee of supply to the standing committees, the standing committees were given only the powers formerly belonging to the committee of supply. There is provision in the Standing Orders for debating the reports of standing committees. I am referring to the operation of Standing Order 58(16) of course. The power of committees to make substantive reports on estimates is not well founded in procedure. I submit that that reference of the estimates is limited, and that Your Honour should find that motions for concurrence in committee reports to be considered under routine proceedings are out of order, on the ground that it is beyond the powers of a committee to make a substantive report on estimates.