

In 1969, Mr. Speaker, by unanimous consent, and I repeat by unanimous consent of this House, a new procedure was adopted for dealing with the business of supply, the one we are now following. It will be remembered that at that time, the House of Commons was overloaded. It was then decided to refer to the Committees the estimates on an area basis, thus giving the House a chance to better deal with its own business, with other pieces of legislation. This is another major reform concerning the business of supply, and it was accepted in 1969 with the unanimous consent of the House.

Since then, we have introduced the television of the proceedings of the House, another major reform. Since then we have held, in 1975-76 quite a number of meetings of the Committee for Procedure and Organization, which have led to numerous reports that have proved to be most useful to the Committee on Parliamentary Reform in the course of its meetings these last 18 months, and have inspired its members in making recommendations mainly in the third report, which have been put to the test here on the floor of the House for some months now. There are other reforms that have been brought about in the last 10, 12, 15 years, Mr. Speaker.

And, just recently, the Committee on Parliamentary Reform produced this third report which is now undergoing a running test and which hopefully will allow changes to become permanent practice and allow this institution to modernize and hopefully become more efficient.

Those seven additional reports will be useful, whatever the prorogation date may be. The Hon. Member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) is indulging in chicanery. If he had been actively practicing law these last few years, he would easily understand that such chicanery, or procedural bickering will not alter the facts. If the Committee on Parliamentary Reform could refer to a report that had not even been tabled in the House, namely the report of the Committee on Procedural organization in 1975-76, in order that we could proceed with the current experiment, there can be no doubt that the House could next month or the month after, next year or the year after, make use of the reports submitted by that Committee. It will still be able to refer to any or a number of those seven reports to allow for the continuation of the parliamentary reform process. It is misleading and entirely unrealistic to claim that if we prorogue within a month or two, or three, these reports are going to die. That is just not true. The reports continue to exist, they are printed in the *Votes and Proceedings*, they have been tabled in the House and will always continue to exist. When are we going to apply them? Before or after proroguing Parliament? That has nothing to do with parliamentary procedure. The reports have been prepared, and they will still be there. Some aspects of the reports will, I hope, be implemented very shortly, while others will be implemented later on, and others even later or perhaps never, but proroguing will not make any difference. Even if we were to prorogue this afternoon, there would be nothing to prevent Hon. Members who are in good faith from continuing negotiations to try and improve Parliament and taking these reports as the basis for such negotiations. That is the situation.

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I would say that trying to push through seven reports, without a trial period, before the end of the trial period based on Report No. 3, is more likely to be damaging for negotiations and for parliamentary reform in the short term, and I deplore it. But in spite of all that, the position of the Hon. Member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker) is in open contradiction with that of the committee chairman whose remarks of yesterday I quoted on the floor of the House, or again with the views of other Members who intend to speak later today and who will refer to the gentleman's agreement in committee. I exclude the Hon. Member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) because he gives a subjective interpretation of that agreement. I do not question his good faith. But the interpretation given by the Hon. Member for Nepean-Carleton is different and altogether inconsistent with that given by the Hon. Member for Pontiac-Gatineau-Labelle (Mr. Lefebvre) and the other committee members who have spoken so far and who might take the floor later on.

Mr. Speaker, I see that my time has run out. I am prepared to answer questions, because I did ask a few in the course of my remarks. We want a thorough parliamentary reform, but why? How can we explain such a major reform as the one advocated in seven reports, a drastic and even more complex reform which is certainly more than an aftermath of the third report, why would anyone insist at this time, during the debate on the Crow rate, that they be implemented as a whole, without any experiment and even before the end of the first experiment on the third report, without considering the Senate reform and without allowing the Parliamentary Leaders, or at least those who act in good faith, to negotiate the implementation first, to complete the experiment we are now making, and to negotiate as well the consideration of those seven reports in the overall context of parliamentary reform?

We are in favour of parliamentary reform, Mr. Speaker, and we have proved that in the past. We will continue to work constructively in spite of this setback, in spite of this unfortunate incident. It will not prevent us from negotiating and trying to improve conditions in Parliament. We are doing that at all levels, whether it has to do with the Standing Orders, Members' allowances or Members' pension which are the object of a Bill I have prepared and introduced in the House. We are trying to improve the overall situation for Members of Parliament and for the Canadian public. I would not want this unfortunate incident to mark the end of our efforts. We will continue even if the seven reports are not implemented before the end of this session. They are under serious consideration by the Government and we will make sure that changes are made on a regular, reasonable and logical basis, so that once they have been implemented they will be permanent and lasting, enabling us indeed to update and humanize this institution and make it more efficient.

• (1240)

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Are there any questions, comments or answers?