

*Procedure Committee Report*

recommendations. This can only be done when the standing orders themselves are revised and the revisions presented to the house. It is at that time, it seems to me, that we will have to decide whether or not the particular changes should be made. If I make one plea, in a sense on behalf of all the members of the committee on procedure and organization, it is that if we do not give approval in principle to this report today, in effect we will be no farther ahead at all. But if we do give approval in principle we will at least be giving the green light to the committee to go ahead and make concrete recommendations concerning the standing orders which will implement the proposals here outlined. If the house decides it does not want to accept these recommendations concerning the standing orders, then it will be free not only to debate them but to reject them at the time they are brought before the house.

One matter has been referred to by both the hon. member for Port Arthur and the hon. member for Villeneuve, namely the fact that the government of the day, whatever government it happens to be, does not do anything about the reports of parliamentary committees. They ask now, therefore, can we expect it to do anything in the future with these reports? I can only say that in my short experience, over the last two years, I have found that my work on committees has been extremely worth while and many of the recommendations brought forth by committees were taken extremely seriously by the government. I assume that this has been the case in the past as well. I was not on the pension committee but I think it is quite clear the government was influenced by the discussions and recommendations of that committee. I think it is equally likely that the government will be influenced by the discussions and recommendations of the committee on consumer credit, of which I am a member. Perhaps there are some committees where, for a variety of reasons, the government cannot yet say yes or no and it has taken no action. It seems to me, however, from my observations that the government is generally influenced by the actions and recommendations of the committees of this house.

**Mr. Churchill:** What about the committee on defence?

**Miss Jewett:** I am not a member of that committee, but I understand from some of the members that much of the time that committee has sat, it has been extremely influ-

[Miss Jewett.]

ential upon the government. In any event, Mr. Speaker, if we are going to argue that committees simply will never have any role in the parliamentary system, we might as well throw in the sponge right now. The important question, surely, is whether or not it is desirable that the committees should be allowed to meet at times when the house is not in session. If we do revise our committees structure along the lines proposed here or similar lines, if we reduce the number of members on each committee—if we do all the other things that are recommended, should we also go along with the idea that the committees meet, whenever possible, when the house is not sitting?

The hon. member for Villeneuve suggested that this was not either particularly necessary or desirable. However, would we not all agree that the pension committee did an extremely good job and had very regular attendance from its members, sitting as it did during much of January when the house was not sitting? The only difficulty was that most of the members had to give up their short recess in order to attend the meetings. The members with whom I have talked have agreed it was extremely worth while having the committee meet when the house was not in session, but they were slightly unhappy about having to give up their recess.

My understanding of the proposal is that the committee on procedure is not suggesting that we give up the regular recesses. It is still the hope that there would be a Christmas recess, Easter recess and summer recess. What the committee is proposing is that in addition to what we hope are ordinary recesses when the members get home and have time, particularly in the summer, with their families, there will be other periods of adjournment during the session when committees will meet and when members will have an opportunity to attend to constituency affairs. If it should be discovered that the work of parliament cannot be done under these circumstances, if it should be discovered that this provides, in effect, too many recesses, I would agree with many hon. members that it would be unwise to give up the Christmas, Easter and summer recesses.

However, do we have to conclude that the work of parliament cannot be done unless we have parliament sitting at all times other than at just the regular recess periods? If we implement the proposal concerning estimates—that they should be referred to the various standing committees some time in the future—and if we implement, when the appropriate standing order comes forward, the proposal