

*Procedure Committee Report*

the governing party and its organization is almost identical with the dilemma we are facing in giving more power to committees of the house. Personally, as someone who sits on the opposition side of the house, I would prefer to think that if we are going to reform and give the ordinary members more power, it is through a house committee rather than through a government caucus committee that this should develop.

However, I will assume that since the Prime Minister came out after this internal Liberal reform to talk about his new politics, and since he emphasized that this new politics would be a kind of politics in which the strongest or most traditional kind of partisanship, or the worst kind of partisanship, if you want, would fall away, giving way to co-operation of younger members in particular in achieving common objectives, party strife and bickering and so on would thus not come into the pattern.

As someone who does believe in this new politics, I think today he has a great opportunity of expanding his view and telling us what he meant by it. However, I think it is fair to say about the performance of this parliament that if there has been anything new in it, it has not been along the lines or toward the objective of any great public parliamentary ideal.

I would have thought we might have moved more quickly on parliamentary reform. I would have thought, Mr. Speaker, that you and your committee, the personnel and reports of which I admire greatly, might have moved with more alacrity and achieved more than it has. We might have been more experimental, even in this house, than we have been had we had a clearer kind of leadership from the Prime Minister and the government. It does not seem to me good enough for the Prime Minister to talk to Liberal party gatherings across the country about the new politics, and by doing so insinuate that in the House of Commons and in this parliament there are many of us who would not fit into the new politics of parliamentary reform. Instead he should come up with something more concrete and give to the House of Commons, not to Liberal party meetings, the kind of leadership which will bring about the new politics that we are to have. I suggest that if we are going to get new politics these particular recommendations will be vital and essential to them.

You cannot pick up any commentary on this subject without finding some kind of recommendation to the effect that the com-

mittee structure should be stronger. But what are the views of the Prime Minister on this? I have some of his views of a few years ago, because I wrote him a letter in connection with this matter, and I should like to read some of this letter into the record just as a starting point. This letter, which was written on October 9, 1959, was written at a time when he was leader of a fairly small minority group. It was also a minority group which had difficulties in getting its members to take part in committees. Some of them were extremely active, such as the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate (Mr. Pickersgill). Other members of his group took a much smaller part; for example, I can remember that the President of the Privy Council (Mr. McIlraith) was much less active in committees than was the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate.

I mention this because this is one of the problems we will be faced with if we go ahead and create the suggested number of committees with the requirement that so many people be active on them. Our performance in the past because of the various traditions and various attitudes of members will not augur well, unless we really come out in the open with standard performances that we may expect from members of parliament, both on the government and opposition sides.

The Prime Minister commented in his personal letter—and he was referring to the Diefenbaker parliament—

It appeared at the beginning of this parliament that the public accounts committee was to be reshaped to conform to its British counterpart. The reshaping has not occurred except that the official position provided a chairman of the committee. The new element...will not in itself suffice to build this Canadian committee in the British model. Its procedure will be determined by the majority—that is, the government members and they have shown little desire to make it function as the committee functions in London.

My comment in this regard is that it seems to be fair. He then went on to state:

Changing the committee on estimates to a standing committee and making an opposition member chairman of one committee are not moves of a character to alter, except in a minor way, the traditional role that committees have played in the Canadian House of Commons. Greater committee activity may have some use for the government party in an attempt to employ the time of its 207 members; it places an extra burden on a small opposition which cannot do full justice to committees and the more important business of the house. Increasing the tempo of committee activity may in the early days of a parliament be helpful to new members as a sort of "parliamentary orientation course", but such a purpose is undoubtedly peripheral and temporary.