

Procedure Committee Report

government took this work seriously and gave them something to do in which there was an area for inquiry.

There are some rule changes with which I agree, Mr. Speaker. I agree that there should be a greater opportunity for the study of crown corporations. I agree with some other rule changes that would allow members to make a more widespread inquiry into the operations of government in this country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Caron (Hull): Mr. Speaker, it will not surprise you if I tell you that I do not approve the proposed changes in the rules. I will not follow the line taken by the hon. member who just resumed his seat, but will deal with this issue in an entirely non-partisan spirit. This matter must be studied calmly so we may know the true opinion of the members.

I appreciate that the hon. members who served on that committee deserve our congratulations for the work they did. However, some were inexperienced; they examined this question from an ideological point of view and could not find any means of improving the situation without changing everything. None the less, the work was well done and done conscientiously. However, I do not agree with them.

For instance, it is suggested that the committees should sit while the house is sitting. When we were in the opposition, Mr. Speaker, I was always against committees sitting when the house was in session. I am still against it. I know that it was allowed, but I feel the house was wrong in making this decision. We have a duty to perform in the house and we have a duty to perform in the committees. It is absolutely impossible to carry out both duties properly and to be in both places at the same time. That is why I am against the proposed changes.

Yet this is what is being proposed in paragraph 22. If committees are to sit when the house is in session, some parties, especially the smaller ones, such as the N.D.P. and the Social Credit, will be very reluctant to agree to such a proposal. As a matter of fact, when I attended a committee meeting I noted that those members had to leave constantly to go from one committee to another in order to give their views about the matters under discussion.

In my opinion, that reason alone is enough for our being against the proposed changes.

Farther on it is said we should take a week off each month. Some members said this

afternoon that they were against that. So am I. Some might say that I am always in my riding, which is just on the other side of the river, and that I see my constituents every day. That is true, I see them every day; but when I was in Quebec city I came back once a week and saw them on Saturday and Sunday. I would attend the whole session and then I could meet my constituents and discuss their problems with them.

It is added that during that time, the committees could sit. A little farther on it is said that members could go and consult their constituents. How can you do both: attend committee meetings and consult your constituents? With one week of holidays per month, you can do only one of two things: consult your constituents without attending committee meetings or sit on committees and refrain from seeing your constituents. I do not think both things can be done at the same time.

The committee did not think about what it was doing when it suggested that. Yet it has seen fit to make that recommendation and I, for one, feel compelled to oppose it.

Somewhere else it is suggested that we spend 20 days on the budget debate. Frankly, I do not understand that proposal. The recommendation about 20 days is neither clear nor precise.

Today we are in power; tomorrow, one never knows, we could be in the opposition. When that day comes we will want enough time for discussion but that will be impossible, since the debate will be limited to 20 days. In my opinion we should give the opposition enough time for an adequate discussion. I know that it is a government's duty to introduce a budget, but it is also the duty of the opposition to criticize it.

I appreciate that we must do our best to avoid filibustering. We will have to do everything possible to prevent people from speaking merely to block the passing of a bill. This is not in the rules, this has been done through the wiliness of men, who found means to get around difficulties. But if we could find means of doing away with filibustering it would be possible to have much shorter sessions.

When I talk about filibustering I am not attacking only the opposition. I know that we were in the opposition, that the hon member from the city of Windsor and myself held the house for 15 days on a bill, which was not normal. However, we did it, but I think we were wrong, and I realize it today.