

Government Orders

The government will have a hard time to convince Canadians that efficiency will be enhanced by overloading a committee with work. In my opinion, that is not logical. One has only to look at the tasks that will be given to this new committee to know that it will be overburdened and, consequently, inefficient. The committee will be responsible, among other things, for the management of committees, consideration of the administration of the House, administration of private members business and checking of all questions of procedure. These three functions alone are too much for one committee, a situation that will completely paralyse the business of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I refer to the old tradition of the House which says that the rules and composition of a committee must be established in an objective way. Presently, all committee dealings are regulated by Standing Orders 100 to 122. I would like to quote the *Précis of Procedure*, third edition, chapter 14: "The House of Commons establishes, in conformity with Standing Orders or, occasionally, with a special order of the House, a mandate defining expressly the extent of the committees' business."

• (1700)

Now, if there are technical problems with the operation and composition of the committees, the answer can be found in the Standing Orders. In short, the Standing Orders are neutral and are not controlled by any political party in particular.

It would seem that if this government's motion is adopted, the House Management Committee will have precedence over the Standing Orders for matters concerning the operation of the House Committees. There is nothing positive about that.

Standing Orders control the committees, as I have just emphasized, and, as we know, the Standing Orders are neutral and are not controlled by anybody, but are applied by you, Mr. Speaker. According to the government's proposal, the new management committee would control the committees. This Committee will be con-

trolled by its members and, because of the make-up of the House, by the government who holds a majority, which means that every operation, every structure of this committee will be controlled by the government. So, with our current system, everything is done in cooperation with the Chair who renders its decision—and we know, Mr. Speaker, you are neutral. We will lose out. Therefore once again, instead of helping us to have more civilized debates, we will have to follow party lines and quibbling will prevail over efficiency.

Mr. Speaker, I have the feeling—and it has been the case since September, as I have said earlier—that our standing committees do not work very well and I wonder whether, until the election, the government really intends to make them work. Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on House Management proposal could very well end up clogging the whole system.

That is why Liberals in the Official Opposition object to that proposal.

There is also the whole question of legislative committees. We are told that legislative committees could only hear technical testimonies. What is that supposed to mean, Mr. Speaker? And who is to decide that any given testimony should be considered technical? The government, obviously. Members in the opposition could very well hold a different opinion. Once more, the government majority is going to crush the minority.

You are signalling that my time is over. But I wanted to contribute to this important debate on a parliamentary system that we should strive to preserve. I hope that government backbenchers will remember our parliamentary tradition and vote with the opposition to defeat this motion.

Hon. Marcel Danis (Minister of State (Youth), Minister of State (Fitness and Amateur Sport) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to be able to address this House of Commons on the subject matter of motion number 30, which deals with changes to the rules of this House.