

question of consensus between majority and minority it would be a very interesting exercise indeed if the opposition were to use it.

One more point I would like to make about the committee system is in terms of the time made available to it. At the present time we have a system where the estimates are brought down and guaranteed to remain for about 2½ or three months in committee. Unfortunately, this means that some 20 committees all receive their estimates at the same time and all rush to hold as many committee meetings as they can, leading to a great deal of congestion, inefficient use of time and competition among them. The result is that the committee structure in terms of the investigation of estimates, leaving out the inefficiency of the backbenchers themselves, leaves a great deal to be desired, although it is incomparably better than it ever was in the days when the estimates were brought before committee of the whole in the House of Commons.

The suggestion has been made many times by backbenchers that the government should to create a system in which so many committees would receive their estimates at varying times of the year. There are approximately 20 committees. Why not divide them into thirds and have a third of the committees take their estimates in the fall term, then the next could come in the spring term and the balance could be discussed in what is known as the summer term. In that way a great deal of the congestion would be reduced. The government, knowing what legislation it was likely to have and, hopefully, under some form of allocation of time formula, would have agreement with the opposition parties as to when they might expect legislation to be passed. It would be possible to work out a schedule that while still tentative would be a lot better than the ad hoc system under which we are operating.

Even though the government has attempted to put more planning into the presentation of its legislation, because there is no agreement on the disposition of such legislation there can therefore be no real planning for the activities of committees. I think this is another frustration which members develop, and which could be eased with a little co-operation across the floor of the House. As I say, if you accept the concept of a responsible government, of a responsible Parliament, then you must move into these new directions quickly.

The hon. member for Selkirk in his opening remarks made the point that many citizen groups are objecting to the concentration of power which is now found in the hands of governments at all levels. One of the reasons for

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this is that not only is there a centralizing tendency going on at all levels of government, each government stretching out to obtain as much authority and power as it can in order to enhance itself, to blow itself up into a greater whole than it was designed to be, but also that in the exercise of that power governments have not been exactly wholesome, not particularly well-advised and they have made a tremendous number of blunders.

One of the reasons this has come to pass is that Members of Parliament have failed to arm themselves with the weapons which are available to them, have not exploited them properly and have wasted too much of their time in what seems to be competition for political Brownie points and, unfortunately, have not made the committee system the effective, efficient weapon it might be in the hands of all backbenchers.

Mr. Lundrigan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, a number of hon. members, including the hon. member for York Centre (Mr. Walker), the hon. member for Pembina (Mr. Bigg) and myself wished to take part in this debate. I understand that according to discussions which have taken place in the last few minutes there is a general feeling that the motion might be permitted to stand in its present place of priority on the order paper. I believe the leader of the House is in agreement with that proposition.

Mr. Walker: On the point of order, Mr. Speaker, this is probably one of the most most important subjects we have had before us for a long time. Many of us would like to have an opportunity to speak. There is precedent for a motion such as this to retain its position on the order paper with the consent of the House. I hope this debate can be carried on the next time notices of motion are before us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Hon. members know, of course, that this can only be done by unanimous consent. Does the House consent to the motion of the hon. member for Selkirk (Mr. Rowland) to retaining its present place on the order paper?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): It is so ordered.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order. The hour assigned to the consideration of private members' business has now expired. It being five o'clock, this House stands adjourned till two o'clock Monday afternoon.

At five o'clock the House adjourned, without question put, pursuant to Standing Order.