

*Motion for Concurrence in Report*

Naturally, as Prime Minister, I hope co-operation can be achieved in planning most of our business. But only in a totalitarian regime would it be demanded that all disagreements be merged into ostensible unanimity. There will be times when any opposition in the name of its principles will have to refuse to co-operate, and when the government, conscious of its responsibility as the government, will have to refuse to yield to the will of the minority. This is entirely normal and healthy in a parliamentary democracy. The proposed order provides a systematic method of dealing with such situations.

I have been dealing with the committee's proposal to establish a proceedings committee to plan the work of the house. Obviously, it would be with government bills that this committee would be chiefly concerned. The special committee makes important recommendations in relation to the procedures for dealing with such bills. These are set forth in the proposed standing orders 77 and 78.

Under our present rules we often spend days debating the second reading motion, but I, for one, have yet to see a government bill stopped by a defeat at that stage, and I doubt that any other member of this house has. In many cases the time that might be used for a thorough study of the clauses of the bill during the committee stage is consumed by the debate on second reading. In its recommendations the committee has sought to play down the importance of the second reading stage and to shift the emphasis to the later stages in the legislative process.

The committee recommends that most bills undergo clause by clause examination in the standing committees, not in a committee of the whole house. This would allow the committee stage to be conducted in a workman-like way. It would have the additional benefit that more than one bill could be in progress at any time in different committees.

Under the proposal the house itself is to have an opportunity to deal directly with the bill when the report of the committee is under consideration. The debate on the report is not to be a repetition of the work already done by the committee; rather the house will move from proposed amendment to proposed amendment.

The requirement of notice of a proposed amendment is important, for the house ought not to be taken by surprise. The new power to be given to the Speaker to permit him to marshal proposed amendments and to select those that best permit the house to express its

[Mr. Trudeau.]

views will help to focus and to improve debate. If adopted, this will be one of the first instances in which the house has made use of the Speaker's new status in order to improve its own procedures. It is consistent with the proposal to eliminate appeals from the Speaker's rulings.

I have dealt with only a few of the constructive recommendations put forward by the special committee. Many of the proposed changes will be supported generally throughout the house. It would be surprising, however, if on a subject such as this there were complete agreement on every point. Indeed it has been reported that there are those who have announced a filibuster to force the government to impose closure.

Back in 1919 when he was explaining the changes that the ministry was advocating in the rules of the British house, Mr. Bonar Law commented that—

—there has never been any change in the procedure of this house which has not been held by the opposition and by a large number of private members to be the end of the House of Commons and to mean that everything was going to pieces... We must not look at questions from that point of view. We have to look at it from the point of view that the thing has got to be done; and looking at it from that point of view I am disappointed at the reception that has been given to our proposals.

I hope we have a good debate. Procedure is a complex subject; and this is the most important reform of its procedures ever considered by this house. Such a debate may help all of us to understand better the changes proposed by the committee.

Nobody should misunderstand the situation. The opposition has stated repeatedly that it believes in debate. We too believe in debate, and we agree that the essence of the House of Commons is debate. But we have not prejudged this issue. We like the recommendations of the committee; but if valid arguments for modifying the proposals are made in the debate, we will not feel bound to adhere strictly to those recommendations. We will consider any reasonable proposals put forward for consideration. I hope that those who do not like the recommendations of the committee will adopt the same approach.

We should let debate have its effect, and then the house should decide.

If it is true that there are members who have prejudged the case, members who have robbed the debate of its purpose by announcing before the debate has started they intend to conduct a filibuster to force closure, I ask them to reconsider.