

CANADA

House of Commons Debates

OFFICIAL REPORT

Monday, June 18, 1923

The House met at three o'clock.

REPORT

Fifth Report of the Special Committee appointed to inquire into Agricultural conditions—Mr. McMaster.

JOINT COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATION

Mr. G. H. BOIVIN (Shefford) moved:

That the First and Final Report of the Joint Committee of both Houses of Parliament, appointed to consider:—

1. The forms of Bills and the best means of affording information and assistance in the consideration thereof at all stages of legislation in both Houses of Parliament;

2. The better distribution of the work of legislation between the two Houses;

3. The practical operation of the provisions of The Senate and House of Commons Act, Revised Statutes of Canada, 1906, chapter ten, respecting the attendance of Senators and Members of the House of Commons, and the expediency of making any alterations in those provisions,—which said report was presented to the House of Commons on Thursday, June 14th, 1923, be now concurred in.

He said: Before the motion is put to the House, I should like to say a very few words concerning the report which was presented on Thursday last as the unanimous finding of the Joint Committee of both Houses of Parliament concerning the matters which were referred to us. Let me say at the outset that this report is nothing more than a recommendation to parliament and to the government concerning the matters therein mentioned and that any action which the House may take to-day will be merely a direction to the government, and will have no effect in changing the law as it now stands upon our statutes until it is implemented by legislation introduced by the government.

The first matter referred to the committee was the form of bills and the best means of affording information and assistance in the consideration thereof at all stages of legislation in both Houses of parliament. I do not desire to take up much time in my remarks on this subject, because the report is very complete and any hon. member reading

it in the Votes and Proceedings of Thursday last will see that the committee recommends that when an opportunity presents itself, the rules of the House of Commons be amended for the purpose of altering the form in which bills are now printed for presentation to the House. At the present time, bills merely show enactments and amendments which it is proposed to have approved by parliament, and there is no explanation whatever of the changes which are made in amending acts. The committee unanimously considered that, if it were possible to print on the opposite pages of the bill, the full section or subsection which it is desired to amend, showing in brackets or in italics the changes to be made, and also to print in a parallel column the section or subsection as amended, it would be a great time-saver and would avoid the necessity of many members asking the minister in charge of the bill: What is the present form of the section?—What is the nature of the change?—Why is the change being made?—and a great many questions which are very essential to a proper understanding of the bill, but which could be dispensed with if all this information were included in the bill when it was presented to the House. However, this is merely a recommendation. The rules of the House of Commons, as we all know, are made by the House itself, and it was not thought by the committee that the rules should be amended at this late stage of the session, but it was hoped that our recommendation might be given consideration and that the rules might be amended at the opening of the next session of parliament.

The second matter referred to us was the better distribution of the work of legislation between the two Houses of Parliament. There was a long discussion concerning this matter in committee, and while some members thought that rigid rules should be enacted to the effect that all private legislation should be divided equally between both Houses, it was pointed out by the majority of the committee that this might work a hardship upon senators and members of the House of Commons who might be requested by