

measure, policy or agreement during this first session, I would not hesitate at all to indicate the major agreement concluded about supply business. My colleagues the House leaders of the other two parties will agree that the most complex procedure in our rules is that of supply.

Because there have been two elections in one year, not only had estimates for last year not been approved by Parliament but those for the current year could not be approved either, outside a time frame like that which is normally provided for under our Standing Orders. To put it another way, because the estimates for the current year had not been tabled in due course on account of the date the election had been called and the date Parliament had reconvened, none of the provisions of the many sections and paragraphs of our Standing Orders dealing with time limits and fixed dates for the adoption of supply bills, and none of the provisions providing for natural, legal and time honoured cutoff dates could apply, due again to the fact that the election had been held on a certain date and that the main estimates had not been tabled at the proper time.

Parliament was therefore in a very confused state. Theoretically, the opposition parties could have taken this opportunity to debate endlessly any item of the estimates, under any department, without any time limit. Parliament could have sat for weeks and months, without any control other than that provided for under Standing Order 33, which is not the most popular section on Parliament Hill, namely, that the government has the authority to use closure to put an end without notice to any debate in the House, thereby preventing members of the opposition from expressing their views as fully as they would care to.

So fortunately we did not have to use Standing Order 33. The opposition parties through their parliamentary leaders, after lengthy but harmonious discussions, made it possible to reach in due time that major agreement I referred to earlier. I say it is a major agreement because we were in a situation where there was absolutely no order possible in this House on the business of the House unless we used the real guillotine which would have created a commotion, poisoned the climate and compromised seriously, I have no hesitation to say, the passage of other bills which had become urgent. What made that major agreement possible and was making it even more important is the fact that we needed interim supplies by May 15 when the Governor General's warrants allowing the government to spend and administer expired.

There again, the agreement was all the more crucial as it had to be reached in the month following the opening of the session, that is before May 15, and we were limited by time and the understandable psychological predispositions of opposition members, following the change in government, but despite all those obstacles, those time limitations, that psychological stress, the parliamentary spirit prevailed—and I have no hesitation to say so—and the parliamentary leaders came to

### *Summer Recess*

an agreement which deserves to be pointed out and which made it possible not only to put order in the business of supply, but we were able to set a very orderly parliamentary timetable to work in a reasonable and to a certain extent innovative way. Indeed the House will have to sit for six days in Committee of the Whole this fall to consider estimates but not only was some order put in the business of supply but at the same time allowed the climate to remain favourable to doing legislative work and, as I mentioned earlier, the passage of 25 pieces of legislation that were absolutely essential for most of them and the others will allow the House to be free this fall to dispose of other measures such as the ones we introduced yesterday, namely, the access to information bill, the bill to turn the Post Office into a Crown corporation, and many other economic and social measures to come.

So, Mr. Speaker, I put my finger on what I consider to be the major development in that first session. Even if there is agreement on the business of supply, that is no excitement for the public. Even if there is nothing glaring about that agreement, it is not a scandal, it is not a sensational measure but a parliamentary measure that is basically essential, crucial, not only to draw up our schedule so that we can dispose of the business of supply, but also to develop a spirit of co-operation, a true parliamentary spirit such as we have known in the last weeks.

As concerns the achievements made in this first stage of the first session, I referred to the 25 bills that have been passed, I referred to the parliamentary schedule for the business of supply. There is also our experiment with parliamentary task forces that my knowledgeable colleague from Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker) likes to call, quite rightly, special committees of the House of Commons. And the House knows that they are actually parliamentary task forces consisting of a smaller number of members. There are six now at work in six different fields of public interest and they are instructed to act rapidly and report to this House within a limited period of time, by December 19, and they may help us to find out how we can make full use of the talents of all hon. members from every region of the country, and more particularly from western Canada.

● (1450)

I think the conclusion of this agreement for the setting up of parliamentary task forces in the course of the first part of the session is an event which deserves to be underlined because it was the result of co-operation between all parties in this House. We must stress that the climate in which we worked has been unusual. Several of us have worked twice as hard, Mr. Speaker, as we were actively involved in a campaign of major importance for the future of our country and I am talking of course of the referendum campaign in Quebec. The first part of the session ran parallel with the pre-referendum campaign and the referendum campaign itself and a very large number of hon. members representing all areas of Canada