

Personnel Changes in Standing Committees

particular committee by his party, for some reason that has nothing to do with the operation of the committee the member has a disagreement with his party colleagues, then I think it is incumbent upon this house to decide whether any change should be made in the personnel of the committee.

This particular motion, Mr. Speaker, is not the usual type that is moved to effect changes in the personnel of standing committees, maintaining the balance on those committees as between government and opposition representatives. In this particular case the house is being asked to endorse what is an internal question, and for that reason I think this motion falls into a different category. It seems to me that unless a member of a committee is guilty of some act that warrants the chairman of that committee asking the house for his removal, changes in committees should not be made in this manner. The issue here is an internal one and should not be dealt with in this way.

Another problem that will have soon to be faced is the representation of independent members on committees. For years there has been a role for independents in this house. Many independents return to the political parties from which they departed. There is usually a fundamental reason behind the move in the first place. For example, I am sure all members recall the recent voluntary exile of one member from one of the parties in this house, owing to extreme personal reasons, reasons which were matters for his own conscience. As long as that member was of the opinion that he should serve on committees, I think the party from whence he came would have agreed to allow him to remain on those committees.

However, Mr. Speaker, there are other members who have become independents who have departed their parties on far less favourable terms and certainly with less good will, and as a result have been sent to Coventry and isolated from their ex-colleagues. I think such a decision on the part of an individual member does not warrant the isolation of that member. As I say, if the members of a particular committee do not see fit to name one of their members and bring the dispute in question before the house for decision, then the matter should not be put before the house in this way, with the house being asked to endorse the disposition of an internal dispute within one political party.

[Mr. Peters.]

I also believe, Mr. Speaker, that in presenting this motion the Liberal party could not have used poorer political judgment if they had tried. I think they have elected the hon. member for York-Humber for some years to come as a result of the action they have taken. I do not think I am revealing any confidences when I say it has been suggested to me on several occasions over the past ten years that I take certain voluntary action. In this regard I am sure I am not alone; other members of the house have also felt strongly about particular matters.

With perhaps three or four days of the session remaining, Mr. Speaker, I think it is very poor judgment on the part of the Liberal party to take this step, at a time when they should be trying to present a unified front to the country. Certainly I hope the members of the house take this matter seriously.

Mr. McIlraith: May I ask whether the hon. member will accept a question?

Mr. Peters: Certainly.

Mr. McIlraith: I have been following his argument rather closely. Is he arguing that this house and the members of other parties should choose what particular members of the New Democratic party should represent that party on different committees? That is the logical conclusion to be drawn from his argument. Is that what he intends to argue?

Mr. Peters: No, Mr. Speaker, and I apologize if that is the impression I have left. What I said was that it was the right of the individual parties to choose who shall represent them on the various committees. I presume they choose their members on the basis of particular abilities for particular committees. However, I suggest that this principle is not being followed in the presentation of this motion. The hon. member for York-Humber was nominated by his party to five committees. What the party is now doing is disqualifying the hon. member from attending those committees simply because he has been involuntarily deprived of his membership of the Liberal party and now has the status of an independent member.

My point is that the house as a whole agreed with the nomination of the hon. member by the Liberal party. Although I believe each party has the right to make its own nominations, what the Liberal party is now doing is taking disciplinary action against the