

Motion for Concurrence in Report

in this report. Because he had failed to give 48 hours' notice, I understand his motion was not accepted at that time. Immediately after that attempt to move the motion a meeting of the steering committee of the Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development was held. At this meeting, which was held either in the afternoon or the day after the attempt to move the motion, the consensus was it was neither wise nor desirable for the committee to ask for concurrence in its recommendations. The reason for this consensus was that the committee did not want unanimity in respect of its recommendations contained in the report to be in any way diluted by any artificial divisiveness which might be the result of a motion for concurrence in the House.

In respect of the comment made by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, surely the committee is the master of its own tactics. If it decides by making a very strong report that it can push the government in the right direction, then it should have the right to decide on the tactics to be employed. If it should be the committee's decision, as it certainly was in this instance, to deliberately not ask for concurrence, then surely it is in its power to take this position. I submit it should be obvious to everyone in this House that any kind of division in respect of this extremely urgent and important question could be misinterpreted outside the House and would not be in Canada's interest.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I appreciate the point being made by the hon. member for Laprairie, but it would seem that if we are to continue the discussion at this time it should be limited to the procedural aspect of the matter. It would seem that we are getting more and more into the substance of the report. When there is a discussion today or later on in respect of the report itself, it would seem to me that might be the proper time to bring up the kind of argument being made now by the hon. member for Laprairie and perhaps by other hon. members taking part in the debate.

I realize how important this point is and I have no intention of limiting the discussion. However, I invite hon. members who take part in the debate in respect of the procedural aspect to limit their contribution to this aspect of the matter which is the procedural point raised by the hon. President of the Privy Council.

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, I have no intention of referring to authorities. However, I wish to make two

very brief arguments. First of all, in complete answer to the hon. member for Laprairie, I would say that the report, having been presented to the House by the committee, belongs to the House and not to the committee. That is the short answer. The committee has reported to the House. It has presented the report. The report then belongs to the House and not to the committee. Therefore, whether the committee decides yea or nay with regard to continuance is immaterial. This is a decision for the House. This was amply pointed out by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre and in the citations to which he referred.

The second point is that the situation in respect of the rephrasing of the recommendations so-called, and participation of hon. members in the business of the House, is completely contrary to the situation in this regard as argued by the President of the Privy Council. When he suggests that this House must be subservient at all times for all things to the dictates of the cabinet, he misstates the situation. The situation is that the cabinet is responsible to this House. Let us underline that fact.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Somehow or other, it seems that hon. gentlemen across the way who occupy the treasury benches now have the idea that this House at all times will do everything they think fit. That is not so, Mr. Speaker. They are part of this House and are responsible to this House.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): There is no question about that. If there is to be any validity to the importance of committees, surely it is quite wrong for the government House leader to argue that it is the chairman, who is there at the behest of the government, who should move concurrence in the report. We have often seen examples where a chairman who was too independent was changed. Something was done or something happened. Perhaps he was just not reappointed. Pressures are brought to bear. Now, if a committee is to do its job it may bring in recommendations which are adverse to what the government is thinking. Well, the government does not have a monopoly on, shall we say, having the right conclusions. Goodness knows, this government makes more mistakes than any other group of mortal men. But here we have a House committee, composed of