

Report of Special Committee

destroy the very noble initiative taken by the House in establishing the committee in the first place, the destructive answer to that question, is that somebody is sitting on the reports. Somebody does not want something in those reports to go forward. I have news for you, Mr. Speaker, and for everyone in this Chamber, especially for my colleagues on that committee. I am one of the people who would be just as happy if certain things in those reports never saw the light of day. Why do I say that? Do I betray everything I stood for as a Member of that committee? No, I articulate what must be common knowledge and common sense for every person in this Chamber.

As a member of that committee I can say that there were items I disagreed with but to which I gave my support. I swallowed my disagreement in the interests of getting a compromise around that particular table. I did nothing any more laudable than anyone else around that table. We all did that kind of swallowing to achieve through compromise a set of initiatives to be agreed upon and then to be brought before the larger committee, the committee of 282, the entire membership of this House.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if as a member of that committee, focusing on a fairly continuing basis on the ramifications of the proposed changes, I can stand in my place today and say that I have some reservations, the operative question is, then, how many more reservations and how much deeper are they in this Chamber of men and women who, on the one hand, will have to be governed by whatever new rules we introduce and agree to here, and, on the other hand, have only had a passing glance at the substance of those other reports which have yet to be concurred in? What I have just said is not a brief for non-concurrence, Mr. Speaker. It is not an argument to undo the work of that all-Party committee. It is not a cloaked suggestion that we ought to go back to square one. But is a plea that we recall why this exercise was started in the first place. That was in part because the rules, or some of them, were not serving us in the best possible way. Also, because partisanship in this House was getting the upper hand. I think you know my views on partisanship, Mr. Speaker. It is a very healthy phenomenon, and the day some Member tells you he is not partisan, he is lying to you. But when partisanship becomes the objective, when it becomes the end in itself, it is time to rein in the rules to see if we cannot have the rules dictate rather than partisanship. That is what brought the House to a determination that it was time to rewrite some of the rules.

That was a fairly hefty exercise. It has taken a committee of 20 people some 16 months to lay the groundwork. What are we doing today? I hope I am wrong in what I am going to say next—

Mr. Taylor: Probably you are.

Mr. Heap: Usually you are.

Mr. Simmons: I believe what we are doing today is running the risk of undoing the very excellent groundwork laid by that

committee. You see, Mr. Speaker, I find a certain contradiction in some of the things being said today.

Mr. McLean: So do I as I listen.

Mr. Simmons: I hear the gentleman, my good friend, the Hon. Member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker), Vice-Chairman of the committee, a man who has made a marvellous contribution to this House and a remarkable contribution to the committee's work.

Mr. McLean: There is more to say.

Mr. Simmons: I hear him say in effect, these are not his words but in essence he said that we ought not to allow this effort to founder on the rocks of partisanship. I heard him say that.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): I said, "Stumble over the feet of discord".

Mr. Simmons: I agree he said it more eloquently, as he always does, but I think that was the substance of what he said. We ought not to allow this effort to founder on the rocks of partisanship. I agree with him. I believe that he believes that with all that is in him. He has put a lot of work into this, as have we all. It ought not now to come apart at the seams because of undue haste. That is where I hear the contradiction. I say to my good friend from Nepean-Carleton that if this was worth waiting 16 months for, the wait from now will not be long. We are not talking about another 16 months.

Mr. Heap: Two years.

Mr. Simmons: He knows, as I know and as the Hon. Member for Spadina (Mr. Heap) knows, that an earlier House order dictates, *de facto*, that we have to address this problem before December 21.

What are we fighting over today, Mr. Speaker? After all the good will, the good intentions, after all the hours or work which have gone into this for 16 months, what are we bickering over today? We are bickering over whether we should rush headlong into adopting the fifth report, and maybe tomorrow or on Monday there will be a similar motion, because there are several on the Order Paper. We are bickering about whether we should rush headlong into it today and in the process invite, rightly so, the disapproval of the various private Members in this House who do not yet, I say with respect, understand the full implications of these reports.

Let me tell you by way of example one of the things I object to in the committee's findings and recommendations. It might be my good friend, the gentleman who sits in this Chamber as an independent Member from Edmonton. It might be a Member in the Official Opposition, in the NDP or in this Party. It might be any other Member who in the future might choose to sit as an independent or be elected to this House outside the umbrella of a particular Party. But I object to such a Member not having the opportunity to respond under the ministerial statement procedure. If one would check the report,