

The Constitution

will find some last vestige of constitutional consciousness, some recognition that the constitution is not the personal property of the Liberal party and the Prime Minister. How often have we heard the cry: "They are moving too slowly for us, so we will shove it down their throats; they are impeding our course, so out they must go"? We have heard it over and over again in the procedural arguments, particularly after the House leader spoke the other day. All of a sudden the clamps came down; everybody was supposed to stop talking, stop debating and away we go, in the face of the Prime Minister's assurance that every single member of this House, from all parts of the country, would have freedom to express his views.

When this matter goes to committee, sir, that committee rule of the guillotine after five minutes is going to be imposed by the Liberal majority. Make no mistake about it, there will be no opportunity for any meaningful participation in debate. Even if it were possible somehow to avoid the tricky process which the government has adopted in putting this matter before the House, we cannot touch the substance of the matter at all. All we can debate is the resolution, as was pointed out by the opposition House leader. We dare to oppose so down we go. We are dead. We are emasculated by the process which has been designed by the government in Machiavellian terms to bring this about. We cannot even ask for time to make suggestions. Not even that. The new absolutism does not tolerate criticism. The new might, the manipulation of the public mind to suit the policies to be shaped by the government in power, does not tolerate criticism. It crushes it beneath the boots of the hobnailed Liberal majority just as it crushed the life out any attempt by Canadians who live above the 60th parallel to be heard at that table. We were not important enough. The hon. member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Evans) says we only number 25,000 people. But we have 15,000 voters, which is more than the combined total of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia when they came into confederation, and we have been fighting for 25 years—a quarter of a century—to get into confederation on the basis of contributing to the constitutional and federated fabric of this country. But as long as that party sits over there, sir, we will never realize our legitimate aspiration, the aspiration of Canadians who are just as equal as any Canadian in southern Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (2120)

Mr. Knowles: Mr. Speaker, I rise briefly on a point of order, as we sometimes say, to set the record straight. During the course of his speech, the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) said that in the old days the tabling of minority reports by committees was always the practice. I questioned this comment and he challenged by memory when I said that in the years that I have been here I have never known a committee of the House to be permitted to table a minority report.

It would take a great deal of time if I sought to read everything that is written on the issue, but I draw the attention of my hon. friend to Beuchesne, fifth edition, citations 640,

641 and so on. If the hon. member thinks that the fifth edition is a recent edition published since certain rule changes were made, I would refer him back to the fourth edition of Beuchesne which was published in 1958 and draw to his attention citations 318 and 319. In both these volumes it is made clear that the only report that can be tabled by a committee is the report passed by the majority. The citations even go so far as to say that the chairman of the committee must sign that report even if he was against it. Beuchesne clearly says that no minority report can be tabled. If that is not enough, I would refer the hon. member to May's, nineteenth edition, pages 658 and 659 where the same practice is outlined.

I am not rising at this point to enter into any discussion on the procedural admissibility of the hon. member's motion; I am merely confirming my memory and questioning his. He really cannot get away with the statement that in the old days minority reports were tabled. They were released outside the House, but not in the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The Chair thanks the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) for his intervention and reserves judgment on the admissibility of the proposed amendment. If any hon. members would care to offer argument at this point concerning admissibility of the amendment, the Chair would entertain them.

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to delay debate on the motion.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Nielsen: Why are members opposite laughing? They have been jeering throughout this whole debate, so I guess it is not surprising. I do not want to delay the House by speaking to the admissibility of the motion, but I do want to say that there is a difference between what I am saying and what the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) is saying. Minority reports were not accepted as separate reports at the table, nor were they accepted as reports coming from the committee, but in those days there was the kind of approach to procedure in committee by which, if there were numbers favouring a minority view—and I forget the numbers—or even a sense by the committee chairman and members on the committee that there was a minority point of view, then that point of view came forward under the signature of the chairman.

I am not trying to sell the House the idea that there used to be a right to table minority reports, not at all.

Mr. Knowles: That is not what you said earlier.

Mr. Nielsen: The hon. member may have misunderstood what I was saying. He knows as well as I do that minority viewpoints were included in the report when it came back before the House and they were debated. That, in essence, is what is being proposed by this motion—a right, because of changes in the practices here, for the minority voice in that committee to go forward with the report notwithstanding any rules and practices that may exist now.