

Speaker's Ruling

able to give their own views on public discussions about the next budget and debate in the House a motion to take note of this process and to give the committee an additional week to complete its report.

On Tuesday we hope to debate third reading stage of Bill C-57 and to commence second reading debate of the income tax amendments introduced this morning.

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[Translation]

POINT OF ORDER

REVIEWING CANADA'S FOREIGN POLICY—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: Order! I am now ready to rule on the point of order raised by the hon. member for Roberval on November 16, 1994, concerning the format of the Report of the Special Joint Committee Reviewing Canada's Foreign Policy.

I would like to thank the hon. member for his intervention, and to thank the former member for Ottawa-Vanier and co-chair of the special joint committee, the chief government whip, the member for Kindersley—Lloydminster and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader for their contributions to this discussion.

In his submission, the hon. member for Roberval requested that the report of special joint committee be ruled out of order for a number of reasons. First he noted that Standing Order 108 provides that dissenting opinions be appended after the signature of the Chair and argued that printing dissenting opinions in a second document breached the provisions of the Standing Order.

Further, he argued that, although the committee had agreed to append dissenting opinions to its report, no decision was taken by the committee to print the report in the format in which it was tabled. He therefore went on to request that the report be reprinted in a single volume.

[English]

The House has a relatively recent practice of allowing committees to include dissenting opinions in the reports. In 1991 Standing Order 108 was amended to permit standing committees to "report from time to time and to print a brief appendix to any report after the signature of the chairman containing such opinions or recommendations dissenting from the report or supplementary to it as may be proposed by committee members".

• (1510)

Also in 1991, Standing Order 35(2) was added to permit a representative of the official opposition to give a succinct

explanation of such dissenting opinions when the committee report is tabled. These changes made explicit the House practice with regard to dissenting opinions in the committee reports.

As the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader noted, a close reading of these standing orders reveals that the provisions of the rules refer only to standing committees of the House.

A review of the 20 reports tabled with dissenting opinions since these rules were adopted in 1991 reveals that four have been from special committees. Three of these four reports were presented in the House and on these three occasions a representative of the official opposition rose to comment, pursuant to Standing Order 35(2).

It appears that it has become our practice to apply Standing Order 108 to special committees and there has been heretofore no challenge to such a practice. So, unless the House directs otherwise, the Chair does not intend to intervene on that point.

The wording of Standing Order 108(1)(a) is very clear. First, it allows a committee to print opinions or recommendations that dissent from a report or are supplementary to it. It specifies that such an appendix is to be printed after the signature of the chairman. It specifies that such an appendix must be brief and brief means short and concise.

The standing order does not allow for minority reports. Regardless of how the media or members themselves may label such dissent, the House has never recognized or permitted the tabling of minority reports. Speaker Lamoureux twice condemned the idea of minority reports, explaining to the House that what is presented to the House from a committee is a report from the committee, not a report from the majority.

I would draw the attention of members to the rulings of July 24, 1969 at pages 1397 to 1399 and March 16, 1972 at pages 194 and 195 of the *Journals*.

[Translation]

If members of this House or parties in this House wish to disseminate their views on a matter, they are free to find their own way of doing so. This Standing Order does not exist to provide a convenient vehicle for publicizing a different or alternate report on a subject matter.

With the exception of the provisions of Standing Order 32(4) requiring that documents be tabled in both official languages, the rules of the House are silent on questions relating to the format of a committee report. These questions are largely left in the hands of the committee.

In the past, committees have allowed their chairs considerable latitude as to the format and presentation of special cover reports to the House. Perhaps in this case we have discovered the limits to such latitude and the lesson for all is that committees