

Striking Committee Report

Mr. Deans: I want to return to a point made by the Hon. Member for Fraser Valley West with regard to the method of reference and the convening of the committees, and to suggest that that is, indeed, a fair topic for today.

When we are discussing the establishing of the committees, one of the various considerations concerns proportional representation. But that is not the only factor. I might say to the Chairman of the Committee, through Your Honour, that one of the concerns is that in the past difficulty has arisen from time to time in calling and convening committees for the purpose of dealing with business. We would not want to think, in this spirit of co-operation which has suddenly emerged in the House of Commons—long needed, I might say—that the Government would go about its business in the same way as it did before and thwart the efforts of Hon. Members to raise legitimate and important matters by simply not calling the committee together.

I assumed, as a member of the Committee which studied the rules and procedures, that because we decided on the automatic reference, committees would meet so that the automatic reference would mean something. Although I know the Chairman of the Striking Committee cannot give me any assurance other than his own, perhaps he shares our concern that committees should be properly convened and meet regularly.

I certainly think the Government should pay heed to this matter, and those who are appointed as chairmen of committees should recognize that their responsibility is not simply to do the bidding of the Government. Otherwise, the whole question of impartiality raised by the Chairman of the Committee would be for naught.

Mr. Turner: I would like to say that the Striking Committee does not have the power, but I will certainly take it up with the House Leader and ensure that chairmen are appointed or elected at the first regular meeting so that we can get on with the work of the House.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, under the new rules I am allowed to comment on what has been said by the Hon. Member for London East, whom I have known for a great number of years and have come to admire. He is not only the Chairman of the Striking Committee in the House but he is also the Chief Government Whip, a position which he occupies with distinction, if I may say so, and he carries out his duties with distinction as well.

As a member of the Committee and of this House, I welcome his statement that he would entreat the Government House Leader to consider this particular matter, because I do want to tell him that during the debate in the House prior to the adoption of the third report of the Committee, it was a matter of concern that committees would in fact meet in order to deal with the business, and it is a matter which is presently before the Special committee. On behalf of the Special Committee on Standing Orders and Procedure, speaking as Vice-Chairman, and I know I also speak for the Hon. Member for Pontiac-Gatineau-Labelle (Mr. Lefebvre), the Chairman, I

would thank and comment him for his undertaking and say that we as a Committee look forward to dealing with that matter. We hope we can provide some help and assurance to the hon. gentleman in the undertaking he has given to the House, and I once again thank him.

Mr. Turner: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say thank you to the hon. gentleman for Nepean-Carleton.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order, please. The Chair must inform the House that the time allocated for questions and answers is now exhausted. If the Hon. Member for London East wishes to respond, he would need the unanimous consent of the House. Is there unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Turner: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to thank the Hon. Member for Nepean-Carleton. I have known him for many years. You have taught me much in the House. Your skill as a lawyer and as a debater in the House is first-class.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): The Hon. Member for London East should address his comments to the Chair.

Mr. Smith: Free commercials today, Walter!

Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin my remarks by responding to the statement of the Hon. Member for London East (Mr. Turner) with respect to the debate which will ensue on the motion to concur in the third report of the Striking Committee. We are not here simply to debate the mechanics of the Striking Committee report and the piece of paper that is before the House. We are here to debate the principle involved, as represented by that Striking Committee report.

● (1250)

That principle is very clear and very important. It is the implementation of the spirit of parliamentary reform that we had hoped and thought pervaded the activities of the Special Committee on Standing Orders and Procedure, the report of which led to the changes made and represented in the Striking Committee Report. So it is principle that we are talking about here, the principle of parliamentary reform and the implementation of that spirit of parliamentary reform. We will not be put down by simply saying that we are quarrelling about numbers or quarrelling about mechanics. We are here to express our concern that the spirit of parliamentary reform will be diminished and destroyed by the attitude of the Government and the Government's representatives, and it is evidenced by this Striking Committee report.

Let me begin my remarks, Mr. Speaker, by reviewing very briefly the history of the specific parliamentary reform movement which led to this change in committee structure and resulted in this report of the Striking Committee. The Special Committee on Standing Orders and Procedure, which has