

*Striking Committee Report*

## PETITION

## PEACE CAMP ON PARLIAMENT HILL

**Mr. Mike Cassidy (Ottawa Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition to the House of Commons. It is signed by some 6,000 people who have been on Parliament Hill at the peace camp. They indicate to the House their desire to see the peace camp remain on Parliament Hill in order to inform people of the nuclear disaster we face and to protest against the Cruise missile.

The people who signed this petition come from as far away as Tanzania, Australia, West Germany and the United States, as well as from all the 10 provinces of Canada.

**Mr. Speaker:** I thank the Hon. Member for the last part of his explanation. For the record perhaps I should point out that obviously the names of petitioners from other countries cannot be submitted. We will check the petition submitted as to form. I just wanted to ensure that the petition included the signatures of Canadians.

**Mr. Cassidy:** Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. The vast bulk of them are signatures of Canadians both local and national. The petition also contains a sprinkling of signatures of people from other parts of the world. There are 6,000 in all.

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## STANDING COMMITTEES

## CONCURRENCE IN FIRST REPORT OF STRIKING COMMITTEE

**Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Minister of State (Government House Leader)):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Hon. Member for Ottawa-Vanier (Mr. Gauthier), the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans) and the Hon. Member for Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton (Mr. Dick), that the first report of the Striking Committee presented earlier this day be concurred in. I should like to address that motion at this time.

**Mr. Speaker:** Does the Hon. Minister have unanimous consent to introduce the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** Mr. Speaker, I recognize that there is an important ongoing debate with respect to the Speech from the Throne and that we have also heard an important statement by the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark). Therefore, I will keep my remarks brief this afternoon in connection with the report of the Striking Committee. However, I think it is an important report for Parliament and for the House.

The Striking Committee report sets the standard for the operation of the standing committees of this House. The committees of this House are its backbone and its heart. They provide Members with the opportunity to engage in detailed scrutiny of the Government's legislative and spending initia-

tives and are the fora for the consideration of major issues which confront the Canadian nation. Because it is in committee that Private Members can have the greatest impact on the legislative process, it is important that a government which is committed to reform is sensitive to the wishes and interests of Members when those committees are struck.

There should be no doubt in anyone's mind that this is a government that is committed to real and meaningful reform. In the Speech from the Throne it was announced that a special task force on the reform of the House of Commons would soon be established. This task force will have a mandate to investigate possible areas of reform and make recommendations to the House. Reform, however, is not achieved through mere changes to the rules of the Chamber. The most critical element of reform is a change in attitude.

If the views and needs of Canadians are to be adequately represented at the federal level, the House will have to work in a co-operative and constructive manner and to respect the traditions of this place. As well, the rights of individual Members must be restored. To that end I believe the report of the Striking Committee is a sign that the Government is prepared to work in the spirit of compromise and co-operation which will be necessary if reform is to succeed.

The report before us today departs from the recent practice of the House. The Provisional Standing Orders under which the House is now operating are the result of the deliberations of the Special Committee on Standing Orders and Procedure in the Thirty-second Parliament. That committee was of the view that the House would be better served by smaller committees. It was felt that by reducing the size of committees it would be possible to give greater opportunity to each member of a committee to participate in its deliberations. For that reason, the House decided that committees should have no more than 15 members and no fewer than 10.

● (1240)

In the last Parliament, that rule was interpreted as meaning that the majority of committees should consist of 10 members and that only those committees, such as the Committee on Agriculture, which had a particularly heavy work-load should consist of 15 members. At all times, committee membership was to reflect the standings of Parties in the House, that is to say, actual numbers in the House with respect to the ability of the Government to reflect its majority or the actual position reflected in the numbers they had in a vote of the committee.

The report that we are debating today, however, provides for 15 member committees in all but four cases. Furthermore, the report provides for Party representation in committee that varies from the ratio of representation in the House.

The proposal outlined in the Striking Committee Report provides for enlarged committees, at least in part, to ensure that they can cope with an anticipated enlarged work-load. Those committees, which deal with House matters or which are customarily chaired by opposition Members, however, are smaller but have a higher proportion of opposition Members than are represented in the House. Thus, on the Public