

The Constitution

authorize the printing thereof, when six members are present so long as both Houses are represented; and

That a message be sent to the Senate requesting that House to unite with this House for the above purpose, and to select, if the Senate deems it to be advisable, members to act on the proposed Special Joint Committee.

Madam Speaker: On Tuesday last, October 21, 1980, when the House was considering government business No. 18 dealing with the Constitution of Canada, the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) offered an amendment which the Chair took under advisement. I might read it for the benefit of hon. members.

That the motion be amended by adding thereto after the sixth paragraph the following:

Notwithstanding any standing orders or practices of either House, the committee shall have the power to table a minority report, with its main report, and any such report shall be tabled by the committee if signed by three or more members of the committee.

The Chair has some serious concerns about the procedural acceptability of this motion.

First of all, the amendment seeks to change the powers of the committee to be established in a way which is not contemplated by the rules or practices of the House as they now stand. The submission of minority reports from committees to this House is not part of our parliamentary practice. This was clearly stated by Mr. Speaker Lamoureux in a ruling on March 16, 1972, in which he quoted paragraph 319 of the fourth edition of *Beauchesne*, which I do not need to repeat now. I might add that the same provision appears in citation 641 of the fifth edition of *Beauchesne*.

If the hon. member's amendment were accepted, it would indeed amend our standing orders in an indirect way. As hon. members know, amendments to standing orders can only be effected by unanimous consent or by a substantive motion preceded by a 48-hour notice. Therefore, I cannot accept the hon. member's amendment.

Mr. Dick: A good Liberal ruling.

Mr. Fred McCain (Carleton-Charlotte): Mr. Speaker, my constituency lies in that area of Canada which might well be called the cradle of confederation. It is just a little extension from Charlottetown. It was in that cradle that the concept of confederation was conceived, and in that plan four then independent countries rendered unto the confederation of Canada their own independence to become part of a greater team.

In that rendering of their independence to the rest of Canada they conceived a plan in which the first ministers of this land, now 11 in all, were each to be one among equals. The practice and procedures of confederation from that moment until this Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) took office were that, being a group of equals, the chairmanship revolved around, through, and among the provinces, and included the Prime Minister of Canada. This Prime Minister has chosen to dominate the various meetings of first ministers of Canada. He has imposed himself upon this nation not as one among equals, but he has self-esteemed himself as the first among equals.

Under this situation the spirit of confederation cannot function, and unity cannot prevail.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1620)

Mr. McCain: Canada has long had two competing parties. One of them was the Liberal party. It was a proud party and it has been successful in the political scenes of Canada because the Liberal party controlled its governments. This government has escaped from the judicious control of its party.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McCain: If any member in this House does not believe me, let him read Canada's political history from cover to cover, let him spend some months, as I have, in neglect of my constituency problems, in neglect of functions in my constituency, to devote full time to the problem of the Constitution of Canada.

I regret that the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Collenette) should say that I was passed this speech by somebody to deliver it in the House. That may be his fashion of operation, Mr. Speaker, but it is not mine, nor has it been, for his information, the fashion of operation of any speaker in this party on this subject.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McCain: There has been no coercion, there has been no suggestion as to "what you say or how you say it," and this includes me, at this, the most crucial moment perhaps of all in the debate. I am proud that at this moment in time I can stand here in defence of Canada. I sang "O Canada" with a zest with which I never sang it before.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An hon. Member: No Liberal stood up.

Mr. McCain: Never before did I feel that I was complying in totality with the words "I stand on guard for thee" as I do at this moment, and as I sang in this House.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McCain: I sat here watching every Atlantic member who was in his seat rising in contempt of the Atlantic area which cradled confederation and which has cherished it. I think I heard the bones of the Fathers of Confederation rattling all over Atlantic Canada as these people, who have not studied the consequence of what we are considering today, rose and voted for closure on this item. Mr. Speaker, it is an insufferable neglect of duty and I hope that, particularly those from Newfoundland, when they go back, will receive the treatment which they deserve.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McCain: They have confronted the opinion of every legislator, regardless of whether or not they support Mr.