

Debating Time Allotment

As the hon. member for York South so ably said, talk of majority reports and minority reports is hypocrisy. I have sat on committees with the hon. member. There is even one member on the other side of the house, the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, (Mr. Allmand), who regularly issues his own minority press statement. But no issue has ever been taken over whether a committee's report is a minority report or a majority report; it is a report of the committee.

I suggest we might as well face the facts. Perhaps it is just as well that this debate is had during the first year of the reign of this Prime Minister in the 28th parliament, because it will show us how serious and sincere is the government about reforming the committee system. This debate will indicate whether the governments' action will constitute a challenge for the members of this house, and particularly whether members on the government side will be made to dance like puppets as the President of the Privy Council pulls the strings.

Mr. Speaker: Since there are no further contributions to this debate, I might try to make a ruling. For a while I was hoping that contributions would continue until ten o'clock, in which case I would have had further time to consider the interesting arguments adduced by hon. members in the course of this enlightening discussion on procedure.

I have to indicate to hon. members that, in my view many, if not all, of the arguments which were advanced by learned members of the opposition this evening in the course of this debate were essentially those which were presented for the consideration of the chair when the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) initially raised his point of order. He himself recognized this this evening, though I am sure that when he heard the lengthy presentations that followed his cursory submission to the house he must have felt a little unhappy that he had not taken the opportunity to repeat for the guidance of the Chair the lengthy and very cogent arguments that he had earlier submitted on July 2.

At that time I considered at length the arguments that were advanced by the hon. member for Peace River, by the hon. member for Edmonton West, by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre and by the hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka. With the advice, counsel and guidance of the clerks and other advisers who assist the Chair in such difficult matters, I considered all aspects of the problem. Following this consideration I

[Mr. Nowlan.]

reached the decision that is recorded in *Hansard* for July 3.

I am afraid that the situation has not changed. We have exactly the same situation this evening as we had originally. I ruled on the former occasion that the motion that had been proposed by the President of the Privy Council for the consideration of the house should be transferred to government orders under the provisions of Standing Order 21. As pointed out by the hon. member for York South, (Mr. Lewis) I had said that it is at the point we are now reaching that the anticipation rule might become operative in the sense that the minister's motion, if proceeded with, might block consideration of the committee report.

If I were asked to rule on this point at this time, I would have to say that I agree that our proceeding with the minister's motion at this time does effectively block consideration of the motion that might have been proposed by the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton.

At the same time, I might say, having taken into account the arguments advanced by members of the opposition, that if the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton had moved his motion I would have recognized that the rule of anticipation would have given his motion precedence, that I would have allowed his motion to go forward in preference to the motion that is now before the house in the name of the President of the Privy Council. I would have so ruled in view of the fact that our committees have now taken on a new significance. Under the rules of the house and in the reports of the Standing Committee on Procedure we have given a new role to our committees. Since the hon. member's motion refers to the report of a committee of the House of Commons, I would have recognized that the hon. member's motion had precedence over the motion of the President of the Privy Council and, if moved, would have blocked the minister's motion.

However, the minister's motion is now before the house. Certainly the rules allow the minister to make a motion at the present time. The motion having been moved, I suggest to hon. members that it has to be considered.

Many other issues were brought before the house for the consideration of the Chair, though I am not sure they were entirely relevant. Hon. members want me to substitute my judgment and my ruling for that of the House of Commons. If a majority of the members of the house think that this motion