

Proposed Changes in Procedure

changes in the rules of the house. These changes can be dealt with either by way of a resolution to be dealt with in committee of the whole, as indicated in certain examples by the hon. member, or alternatively in the manner of proposals made in a committee and the recommendation that the report of the committee should be considered with Mr. Speaker in the chair. This procedure has equal validity.

I suggest there were really these two options open and we have chosen the one option, namely that of dealing with these very complicated matters through a report of the special committee on procedure and a motion for concurrence in that report. I point out that in recent years, on April 26, 1967, an order of the house was adopted covering some fairly complicated changes in the rules. As the hon. member says, those changes were made on a provisional basis; nevertheless they were complicated, and this was done by concurrence in a committee report. This was the case, too, with regard to a permanent change which was made in the rules by concurrence in a committee report recommending a time limit for the ringing of the bells.

There are, therefore, precedents to support both these vehicles for getting house approval of these particular measures. I would therefore disagree with the argument advanced by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre when he says there is only a unique procedure for doing this when you have complicated and perhaps controversial proposals.

I should like to make reference to one other matter which the hon. member mentioned, and that is that this is a complicated question and therefore is not to be decided on one single vote. I point out in the first place that the house decided, and I think it was a wise decision, that changes of the scope which have been considered in the special committee on procedure are perhaps better made by a small representative group of members in a special committee on procedure rather than in the house as a whole. I would say that is so because it was found necessary to hold no less than 26 sessions of that particular committee, and to invoke the assistance of the people at the table as well as other officers of the house for the purpose of drawing up these very complicated changes in the standing orders. I make the basic argument, therefore, that if changes are to be made, those changes should be made in a special committee on procedure because that is the most effective forum for dealing with such an examination.

[Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale).]

It is acknowledged at once there is not general support for all the proposals. It is really because of this non-support of the whole of the report of the special committee on procedure that there was not a single report but three reports. The first report was merely for the purpose of explaining the attitude of the committee toward the proposals, and a general description of the changes. The second report contains the principal changes in the standing orders and also those which are the most subject to controversy. The third report on the order paper, the fifth report of the committee, incorporates those changes, which it has been assumed by the special committee on procedure will not be of a controversial nature and will probably find general acceptance in the house.

It is not true to say that the hon. member who has just spoken or any other hon. member will be without a vehicle for expressing his disagreement with what the committee has done, or without a vehicle for getting any committee decision changed. I suggest, given the complicated nature of the subject matter and given the complicated nature of the discussions which have taken place, probably the most appropriate manner for having the proposals changed is by taking the action that is open to hon. members, namely by moving an amendment to refer the report back to the special committee on procedure so the committee might further consider the report along certain lines, which would be suggested in the amendment to the original motion for concurrence in the report.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, the two principal points made by the hon. member are, if I may express the last one first, that the house would not have an opportunity to express its opinion on the various proposals; and in answer I contend this opportunity does exist under the present procedure. The first of his two points is that there is a compelling precedent that requires rule changes of this kind to be dealt with in only one way; and I contend this argument is wrong, and wrong in face of the very precedents cited by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, which indicate that either procedure has been and is acceptable to the house in changing the standing orders of the house.

Mr. Baldwin: Next year the government will be changing them by order in council.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre suggested in his presentation that the debate on the report be