

smaller standing committees rather than 10, is consistent with the philosophy of reform and is fair.

Mr. Speaker: Before calling on the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans), I should like to point out that the rules of the House provide for a ten-minute question and answer period if Hon. Members wish to ask questions of the Hon. Member who has just spoken. If there are none, the Chair will recognize the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain.

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I will be much less involved in the discussion than was the Hon. Member for Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton (Mr. Dick). I can appreciate the concern that he expresses. I have indicated my understanding of that concern on both occasions when I was a member of the Striking Committee.

I recall during the deliberations of the special committee that studied parliamentary reform that I personally raised those matters in the committee when it met at Meach Lake for the purpose of drawing up its final report. I found no support for the proposal that I made, which was to make the committees of such size as to allow for proper representation from both sides and from each of the Parties in the House of Commons.

I indicated on the two occasions last year and this year again that, if the Striking Committee were of a mind to alter the size of the committees to ensure that they properly reflect the representation of each of the Parties in the House of Commons, I would not in any way stand against that. That did not find favour. I say to the Hon. Member who spoke on behalf of the Official Opposition that it serves no useful purpose for me to mislead him. I cannot see that we would in any way be better off by taking an unfair situation and making it into another unfair situation. That is what the Hon. Member is asking us to support.

Mr. Dick: But less unfair.

Mr. Deans: Less unfair from the point of view of the Official Opposition, but certainly no less unfair from our point of view. I would be remiss in my duties and responsibilities if I were to accept, given that the committee studied the question, given that on behalf of this Party, and I believe on behalf of all Hon. Members at the time, I made recommendations that would have allowed a committee of the size that would have ensured proper representation, given that that was turned down and given that this special committee on parliamentary reform, having studied it, decided to recommend the size of committee we are now faced with, that the imbalance which presently exists and which I willingly accept exists, should be willingly altered for the purpose of improving the standing of the Official Opposition to the detriment of the standing of the NDP.

Recognizing the problems, if the Hon. Member had proposed new numbers for the committee which would have allowed proper representation based on the number of seats held by each of the Parties, I can assure him that both in the

Concurrence in Committee Report

Striking Committee and in the House I would not have spoken against it. However, I am afraid I am not in a position to accept on behalf of my colleagues that we should have less than that to which we are entitled. Let's face it, when you only have one member, it is difficult to have less than one member on a committee.

Mr. Nielsen: You do it all the time.

Mr. Deans: It may well be that the one member we send to the committee is the equivalent of five or six Conservatives. Recognizing the superior intellect of our members, we do recognize that to reduce the number to less than one in some way or another would hardly be satisfactory.

I say to the Hon. Member in all fairness that I regret we cannot support his proposal. If he would care to put forward another proposal that would allow for the numbers to reflect truly the proportions in the House—and the Whip for the Government knows this as I said it before—we would be quite happy to sit down and look at such a recommendation. We would be happy to sit down and review the numbers that make up the committees and the committee sizes, if it were the desire of the House of Commons, in order to consider whether a different sized committee would be better, but we are not prepared to further diminish what little influence we have been given on the committees by granting to the Official Opposition additional membership.

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, at least they would be there as they usually are:

Mr. Deans: They may well be there, but the presence of Opposition Members in committees infrequently results in a higher level of debate or understanding.

Mr. Nielsen: I thought you were a wit. Now I know I was only half right.

Mr. Deans: That one came out of the Ark with you.

Mr. Nielsen: That was Diefenbaker.

Mr. Deans: Hon. Members can appreciate my reasoning. The nature of the committees allows for members to participate in accordance with their proportional representation. The opportunity for all members to participate would be reduced considerably if we were to allow for an additional member from the Conservative Party. I thought the Hon. Member's argument was interesting but not supportable.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: No.