

Constitution of Canada

Mr. Speaker: Order. I take the liberty of pointing out to the hon. member that as much as possible he must restrict himself to the procedural aspect of the issue under consideration. He now seems to be expounding the philosophy of the parliamentary government and I do not think that is the point raised at the present time.

Mr. De Bané: As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, my second point is that committee reports are always prepared *in camera* so that members do not have the opportunity of expressing their points of views, as is done in any other debate of this House. Of course, one may reply that members who have minority reports to submit can always forward them to the media, but obviously this is not the point because members enjoy the privilege of having their reports recorded for all time in the proceedings of Parliament.

It can also be said, as the co-chairman of the committee suggested, that the report states a few times—especially in the communiqué—that the majority has decided a certain thing. They do not say “unanimously”. But of course saying “by a majority” does not indicate who voted for and which motions have been rejected by a majority.

I would like to end by quoting to Your Honour, further to the quotation of my hon. colleague for Charlevoix regarding paragraphs 26 and 27 of the 1971 report by the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence, the Report of the Select Committee on Overseas Aid, Session 1970-71 of the House of Commons in London.

At page 67 of the 1971 report, the name of the sponsor of each motion is given in full and then it is stated. The amendment was made, the Committee divided—“Yeas”, so many, “Nays”, so many.

And when the vote is tied, the chairman has a casting vote.

So, when the joint chairman of the committee argues that there are no precedent here or elsewhere, the hon. member for Charlevoix mentions a precedent from this House, the hon. member for Egmont (Mr. MacDonald) mentions one from Australia and I mention one from the Mother of Parliaments.

• (1510)

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, the problem with which we are dealing now is of the utmost interest to me. I listened with great attention to the remarks of the hon. member for Charlevoix (Mr. Asselin) and also to those of the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen).

The issue is one of procedure and the function of committees, according to what the President of the Privy Council said, is to examine a particular question in order to further the work of the House. In a committee, the question is given closer scrutiny while often the House can proceed with other measures.

I always understood that committees had a responsibility but I never understood, Mr. Speaker, that some committee reports are discussed by Parliament and others are never discussed.

If committees have been established for studying specific problems, I think this was to throw more light on a

subject after a special study. So, if this is the purpose, when a committee is tabling its report and dissenting members cannot have their viewpoints stated in this report, I think the House and the government are deprived of valuable information.

Since Parliament may accept or reject a committee report and in view of the serious nature of the problem and of the Canadian political climate, Parliament should stand as an example to the whole country and respect any and all minorities.

Under the present circumstances, the tabling of a minority report is requested. We are not aware of its content. So if the government wishes to know the viewpoints of all the committee members we should logically accept both the majority and the minority reports. This would be a fine example to the whole country and government would be able to know the evidence given to each committee member everywhere in the country.

Finally, I must say that I have already been a member of a most important committee which spent tax money to travel throughout the country. I had no opportunity of having my views incorporated into the report. I was quite disappointed and this report which was tabled in the House has never been called by the President of the Privy Council to be debated.

That, in my opinion, is the procedure which should now be followed. I readily agree with the hon. member for Charlevoix and ask the Chair to accept the minority report.

Mr. Speaker: I thank hon. members of every party who, for the guidance of the Chair, have stated some sound views, I am sure, which I will try to take into consideration when giving a ruling on the point of order of the hon. member for Charlevoix (Mr. Asselin).

The hon. member has indicated that he was rising on a point of order before concurrence in the report.

I wish to point out immediately that the matter has nothing to do with the approval of the report. A motion for concurrence in the report will be put forward in due time, I suppose, either by the chairman of the committee or another member on his behalf or a member speaking on behalf of the committee members.

We are now discussing the tabling of the report and we must take for granted that it has already been tabled and that it is now before the House.

If I understand correctly, the hon. member for Charlevoix rose on a point of order because he would like to know whether minority reports can be tabled or should be concurred in at the same time as the majority report. No need to indicate to hon. members that this would be an entirely new practice.

Members who have participated in this debate on procedure have referred to parliamentary practice in Australia. The hon. member for Matane (Mr. De Bané) has referred to the procedure in Great Britain, but no precedent has been quoted to me to the effect that I could allow the submission of one or more minority reports.

Members have largely quoted, I admit, sections and precedents which carry weight in such cases. Paragraph