

*Business of the House*

Member of Parliament in the last nine years that a Party has forced that kind of Striking Committee to meet. It will be the first time in many years that a political party will have forced debate on the report of such a Striking Committee.

What I am saying is that what we are doing is proper. We are giving proper notice and we thought and still think that we are doing only what the Hon. Member wanted us to do.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

● (1510)

**Mr. Nielsen:** Madam Speaker, that is a deliberate distortion of the truth. What I requested in the final meeting of the Striking Committee, and the Government House Leader well knows this, is only that the report be introduced on the last possible sitting day, which was last Monday. There was no request whatsoever to bring on debate on that report as soon as possible. I would have expected that to occur, but I would not have expected it to occur at the expense of a whole Private Members' day; and that is what the House Leader is attempting to steal from us.

I am sure that if he had been following the normal parliamentary courtesies he would have expressed his intentions, which no doubt he knew of when he met with the Striking Committee and when he discussed this matter with myself and the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans), the Acting House Leader for the New Democratic Party. But he did not do that, knowing full well as he sat there what he intended to do this week. I find that totally not in keeping with the kind of good faith that he has been asking us to display and which we think we have displayed in the adoption of these experimental rules. Indeed, I find his action most underhanded and despicable in attempting to undermine Private Members in this way.

**Mr. Pinard:** Madam Speaker, I fail to understand why the Hon. Member gets so upset. After all, if he reads the recorded notes of the Committee which met last week, in the third meeting he himself asked the Chairman of that Committee, the Government Whip, when he intended to move concurrence of that report. I remember very well that the Government Whip answered him, "As early as possible after the tabling of the report". It was after that answer that the Hon. Member for the Yukon suggested and pressed very much in the Committee that in fact we do not table that report before the last allowed day, which was yesterday.

Today, all he is getting is what he asked for. For other reasons—and I do not want to impute any motives to him—he seems to have different views today. What I am saying is that we did not know last week he would react this way when he was pressing for us to table the report yesterday and that we move concurrence in that report as early as possible to allow the committees to work in the House of Commons and in the parliamentary system. Now must we conclude that he is not interested in seeing the committees work?

He is saying that tomorrow is Private Members' day. We have had a very hard time to find three Bills to be dealt with

for Private Members' Business tomorrow. That is a fact, because colleagues on his own side are not ready to proceed. The committee system is very important for Private Members. If they want to debate it, why do they want to use Government time to do it? We have three days a week, as I explained last week, to deal with urgent and important business for the Government; therefore, our intent is still there. But if he has very strong reasons and he is able to convince himself that he is right, changing his mind today, then we might consider dealing with this matter some time next week. I think it is unfortunate that we have to wait that long to have the committee system work.

I would have expected that the Hon. Member would have facilitated, in a spirit of parliamentary reform, the adoption of that report, because once again it is the first time in many, many years that the House Leader of the Official Opposition forces a debate on the report of a Striking Committee.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Madam Speaker, it is not the Official Opposition which is forcing a debate on that report, it is the intransigence of the Government House Leader in his unreasonable treatment of the recommendations of the Special Committee which intended flexibility in numbers on those committees but have been required to submit to the diktats of the Government House Leader.

When he speaks of the actions of the Government Whip with respect to the timing of the tabling of the report and the debating of it, he will well recall that when I asked the Government Whip that question as Chairman of the Striking Committee, he did not answer but looked over to the Government House Leader in order to get his answer.

No one suspected that any attempt would be made to steal Private Members' days in this underhanded way. What the Government should do if it wants to treat Parliamentarians fairly—there are all kinds of Private Members on this side who were not canvassed and who have Bills that can be debated tomorrow—and if he wants to act in good faith, let him designate Friday for the debating of the report of the Striking Committee.

**Mr. Deans:** Madam Speaker, I listened to this exchange with some interest. I want to offer the comment that perhaps it is the kind of consideration that ought to take place at a meeting that could be called between the House Leaders in order to try to find an alternative that would satisfy even the noisy Tory in the back row.

I think it would be better, in the interests of the civility of the House, if we did not have the debate tomorrow. I do not see any reason why we should, in all fairness, create a conflict unnecessarily, and quite obviously we are going to have that conflict. I do not think that will facilitate the implementation and good working of the new House rules.

So keeping that in mind, I would like to ask the Government House Leader and the Opposition House Leader if it might not be more appropriate for us to discuss this—

**Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton):** It would have been.