

And a point of order having been raised as to the Tabling of minority reports from Special and Standing Committees and questions of privilege having been raised in relation thereto;

RULING BY MR. SPEAKER

MR. SPEAKER: I thank honourable 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 honourable Member for Charlevoix (Mr. Asselin).

The honourable 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 honourable 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 honourable 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 honourable 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 319 of the Fourth edition of Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms has been quoted to this House: "The report of the committee must be signed by the Chairman. No other signature should be affixed to a report for the purpose of showing any division of opinion in the committee, nor can it be accompanied by any counter statement from the minority, as such is unknown in British parliamentary practice."

I would add, by the way, that it is also unknown in Canadian parliamentary practice.

I keep on quoting: "The Chairman only signs by way of authentication on behalf of the committee. He should sign even if he dissented with the majority of the committee. No minority report should be made to the House."

It should be noted that Bourinot refers to the fact that in certain circumstances, a minority report has been

attached as an appendix to the majority report of the committee.

It must be indicated also that the precedent quoted to justify this practice dates back to 1874. It might perhaps be useful if I were to read this quotation from the Fourth edition of Bourinot's. Here it is: "No signatures should be affixed to a report for the purpose of showing any division of opinion in the committee; nor can it be accompanied by any counter-statement or protest from the minority, as such a report is as unknown to Canadian as to English practice. When the chairman signs a report, it is only by way of authentication. In 1879, a report of a dissenting member was brought in and appeared in the votes, but attention having been called to the irregularity of the proceeding, this minority report was ordered not to be entered on the *Journals*. The rule with respect to such matters, however, has been more than once practically evaded by permitting a minority report to appear in the appendix to the report of the committee;"

This is where reference is made to a precedent dating back to 1874.

On the other hand, honourable Members, especially the honourable Member for St. Paul's (Mr. Wahn) and the honourable Member for Lotbinière (Mr. Fortin) have stated that in recent years, especially in 1971, the report of the Committee on External Affairs and National Defence included the dissident or minority opinions of some members.

I find nothing in the precedents established by the House to prevent such a procedure. What the Standing Orders and parliamentary practice forbid is the tabling of minority reports. It is somewhat in the nature of an *obiter dictum* to suggest that a report may include dissident or minority opinions.

But what reaches us eventually is a single report, the majority report, and the report of the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence which was presented last year contained dissenting opinions of course but only one report was presented and no suggestion was made that the House should receive at the same time a second, third, or fourth minority report.

In view of the circumstances, I really cannot see how I could ignore this long parliamentary tradition and allow the honourable Member for Charlevoix, the honourable Member for Lafontaine (Mr. Lachance), the honourable Member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin), in short all honourable Members who said that they had minority reports to present, to Table those minority reports.

In very eloquent terms, the honourable Member for Greenwood suggested that time has come to change the Standing Orders. It is possible. Some Members have said that time has come for Parliament to give members of a committee the opportunity of expressing their diverging points of view in a minority report. Perhaps, but unfortunately it is not up to the Chair to make such a decision.