

Constitution of Canada

names of those members. The fact is that the committee, in pursuance of the jurisdiction given it by the House, decided not to follow that course. The report I presented this afternoon is the report that was adopted by the majority of the members of the committee. The committee has, as it should, made the decision to print only the majority report. I should say, however, that in the text of the report the committee acknowledges there are dissenting opinions. In several places in the report there are references to positions taken as being the positions of the majority rather than of all members of the committee.

In conclusion, with regard to the matter of incorporating names and the particular feelings of individual members on questions, the committee has already made its decision and I submit that the House has no option but to accept the decision which has already been made by the committee.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I shall heed your admonition that comments be brief. In response to part of what was said by the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen), I think there should be in our minds at any rate a distinction between legislation when it is referred to a committee and a subject.

When a bill is referred to a committee, that committee has to make its report in clear terms, yes or no. However, when a subject is referred to a committee, surely what this House wants is ideas. I do not see anything wrong with a report or reports coming back from a committee to the House which give to the House the benefit of not only the ideas of those who comprise the majority but the benefit of the ideas of the minority members of that committee.

I thought another point which the President of the Privy Council made or sought to make was a bit of a red herring. He suggested that if there were four, five or six reports we could have a series of debates on motions to adopt those various reports and that would create a great deal of chaos and confusion.

If we are going to meet this problem effectively, it is obvious we are going to have to make some rule changes. Certainly we could provide in any rule that it is only the majority report that is debated on the floor of the House. At the present time the only provision for concurrence by motion is in a report, not in a minority report or a minority opinion which might be tabled at the same time.

I have no hesitation in saying that I realize Your Honour will have difficulty, particularly in view of the clear language of citations 318 and 319 of Beauchesne's Fourth Edition, in ruling that the hon. member for Charlevoix (Mr. Asselin) or other members have the right today to lay on the table their minority opinions or minority reports. However, I want to underline two things that have been said during the course of the debate this afternoon.

The rules, including citations 318 and 319 to which I have just referred, do not deny to any committee the right, by a majority vote, to include in its report the opinion of the minority. The hon. member who spoke just before me, the chairman of the committee, said that his committee decided not to do that. However, the hon. member for St.

[Mr. MacGuigan.]

Paul's (Mr. Wahn) earlier reported that his committee had decided to take that course of action.

Perhaps I may be digressing for 30 seconds from the point of order, but I should like to say this. With all the talk we hear from the other side about participation in the process of government and all the talk we hear about the importance of the committee structure, is it not time that committee work was made something other than monolithic? Is it not time that committees had the decency, courtesy, foresight and intelligence to report back to the House not just the opinion that got the largest number of noses when the count was made, but the opinions and ideas that came out of the discussion in the deliberations of that committee?

I make a strong appeal to committees, to this one and to others, to update themselves and think of committees not just as instruments of the government there to endorse one opinion only but as instruments of parliament that have been given a job, to bring ideas back to the House of Commons.

As I said in my opening remarks, I see a difference between legislation and subjects which have been referred to a committee. In the case of subjects, surely we want all the ideas we can get that will be good for the discussion that goes on in parliament and in the country.

The last thing I should like to do is concur in the suggestion that others have made that surely the time has come to make any changes in the rules that are required in order to update ourselves in this regard. If this means that the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization should look into this matter, I hope it will be given the opportunity to do so right away.

Mr. Pierre De Bané (Matane): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to comment on what was said by the chairman of the committee, the hon. member for Windsor-Walkerville (Mr. MacGuigan). He made several references to the proceedings of the committee. His argument serves the point raised by the hon. member for Charlevoix (Mr. Asselin). He said that when a member suggested that his opinion be included, the majority decided, that when a member suggested that votes be registered, the majority decided.

In the House of Commons, everyone at least has the right to have his opinion made public. It is recorded in *Hansard*. As hon. members know, when a committee report is drafted it is done in camera. The public do not know what has been said there. It is not recorded. When a member moves a motion or votes for or against something in the House, it is recorded and available to the public. The stand that each member takes is known.

[Translation]

Now, Mr. Speaker, the point raised by my hon. friend, the co-chairman of the committee seems to concern us.

Mr. Speaker, I think we all appreciate the same values—that states, countries, forms of government, political structures and especially the number of reports are sacred and history is there to prove it. And how! What is eternal, precious and must be saved at all costs is the primacy of man, the principle of freedom, equality and the right to defend our own opinions within legal structures.