

until approximately two-thirds of the way through the first session of the next Parliament. By then we will have had almost three years' experience and hopefully will be able to reach a consensus on what we should keep, what we should change and what we should discard.

In conclusion, I should like to thank the members of the committee for their civility. I have had the honour to chair many committees and I think that it is fair to say that the meeting of this one was, despite the fact that we had a few votes, the shortest and most polite meeting that I have ever attended.

Mr. Paul Dick (Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to add a few comments, after hearing the Whip of the governing Party.

As the Party which has introduced and brought about the discussion of parliamentary reform in recent years, I am very pleased to discuss some of the inequities which I believe arise under the present system. I would like to point out that it was our Party under the Government of the Right Hon. Member for Yellowhead (Mr. Clark) and his House Leader at the time, the Hon. Walter Baker, who first took an initiative toward parliamentary reform.

The Hon. Member for Surrey-White Rock-North Delta (Mr. Friesen) prepared an intensive paper at that time. It was as a result of the Government introducing in the last session of Parliament its infamous national energy policy of 15 pieces of legislation wrapped up as one Bill that triggered a debate and the ringing of the bells which forced this committee to get together.

Although it has not been traditional to debate Striking Committee reports, this being only the second time such report has been debated in recent history, I strongly believe that we must use these occasions to assess real progress which is being made with regard to parliamentary reform.

More specifically, to permit this report to be adopted without debate would imply acceptance of a membership breakdown of six for the governing party, three for the Official Opposition and one for the other opposition Party, which severely discriminates against the Official Opposition.

I accept the fact that the Striking Committee has great difficulty in allotting proportional party representation based on the present standing of 148 Liberals, 102 Progressive Conservatives and 30 NDP members, when membership on standing committees has been limited to a minimum of ten and a maximum of fifteen.

As has been pointed out by other Members, under the present standing the only truly fair committee division would be either a nine-member or seventeen-member committee. Using these numbers it will be possible to get a breakdown of membership between all three Parties which reflects the breakdown in the full House.

• (1520)

Unfortunately, the new Standing Orders, which stem from the recommendations of the Special Committee on Standing

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Orders and Procedure, limit committee membership to between 10 and 15—thus our continuing numbers problem.

However, we must go back to the spirit of that Special Committee on Standing Orders and Procedure, to the spirit of parliamentary reform, of genuine co-operation and the desire to make Parliament relevant and workable. Let us consider the spirit of compromise, flexibility and conciliation. I believe that if we are to return to that spirit we would reject this Striking Committee report and seriously attempt to find a breakdown of committee membership which is truly fair, or at least fairer than the one proposed.

I do not believe there is a Member on any side of this House who could honestly say that the present division of Party membership on the small ten-member standing committees reflects the standings in the House. At the moment government Members represent about 53 per cent of the 281 seats in the House—not counting your own, Mr. Speaker,—but they represent 60 per cent of the Members in committees. The New Democratic Party has a total of 30 seats, which is in the 10 per cent to 11 per cent range and reflects well when compared to the 10 per cent representation on the small standing committees.

It is therefore the Official Opposition that is really discriminated against in committee representation. With slightly more than 36 per cent of the total seats in the House, the Progressive Conservative Party is allowed only 30 per cent of the members on standing committees.

A more equitable solution, admittedly still not perfect but at least fairer, would be to add one Member to the ten-man committees, allowing for a breakdown of Party representation as follows: Liberals—six Members, being 54.5 per cent of the standing committees which is very close to the 53 per cent of the Members in the House; Progressive Conservatives—four Members, being 36.36 per cent of the standing committees which is very close to the 36 per cent and a small fraction which we have as representation in the House as a whole; and the New Democratic Party—one Member, being 9.1 per cent.

Under this breakdown the Liberals would still benefit from a slight overrepresentation on committees, namely 54 per cent versus 53 per cent; the Progressive Conservative committee representation would almost exactly mirror our numbers in the House—namely 36 per cent plus fractions versus 36 per cent plus fractions—while the New Democratic Party would be slightly under-represented in comparable percentage terms—approximately 9 per cent versus 11 per cent.

I know my friends sitting to my left will say we should consider the ratio between the three Parties. Based on the Party standings in the House, the ratio is more or less five Liberals to three Progressive Conservatives to one NDP Member.

Our proposal for committee representation would increase the ratio between the Official Opposition and the NDP to four to one from the previous three to one ratio. This, I agree, slightly distorts the proportions of the seats in the House, but the distortion is not as great as what has been in practice for