

Prior to 1968, the Committee of Supply could consider, reject, reduce and adopt estimates but the ultimate concurrence in the estimates rested in the House after report from the Committee of Supply. In like fashion, standing committees may now consider, adopt, reject, reduce and report to the House on estimates, but as was the case with the Committee of Supply, the ultimate concurrence in the estimates still rests with the House.

It will be noted that there was no enlargement on the powers of standing committees on estimates by virtue of the new Standing Order 58. The only alteration was that which was necessary in House procedure by the abolition of the Committee of Supply.

There can be no doubt that standing committees are empowered to make reports in relation to their study of estimates. The first example of such a report was that of the Fourth Report of the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates made February 28, 1969, concerning the use of one-dollar items for the purpose of legislating. That Report followed upon the adoption of the revised rules in December 1968.

It is interesting to comment here that that Report is the only instance of a committee report on estimates being brought into consideration under the provisions of Standing Order 58.

The fundamental question to be considered is whether the House or the standing committee is to remain paramount. Will the committees direct the House by virtue of their reports or will the House direct the committees by means of orders of reference?

If a standing committee is permitted to make reports of a substantive nature when considering the estimates of a department, it would follow that no limit could be placed on the number of reports from a committee. Surely the House would be hard pressed to consider all of such reports on motions during the daily routine of business.

It has been suggested that the powers and scope of committees should be and have been enlarged under the recently adopted procedure but surely it cannot be contended that the committees have powers which exceed those of the House.

It could be said that the "report of a committee, both in its form and as to its substance, ought to correspond with the authority with which the committee is invested".

To illustrate what the Chair had in mind, it is suggested that reference be made to the comments by the honourable Member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) in the discussion which arose on April 10. The honourable gentleman in particular then referred to a Report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs in relation to a document known as the Woods Report, which Report, in the honourable gentleman's own words, contained "literally scores of recommendations—which, if they were implemented, would involve the expenditure of money". That Report was the order of reference to

the committee and as such the committee could do nothing except to consider and recommend on the desirability of making such payments. The form and substance of the Report could not be otherwise. It should be also noted that the Committee recommended that certain proposals be implemented—in other words, a direct order to the government was not involved.

That is an excellent example of where a standing committee considered and reported to the letter within the four corners of its order of reference.

It would be an exceedingly hazardous exercise on the part of the Chair to undertake, in general terms, a delineation or a description of the acceptable form and content of a report of a standing committee on estimates but in the debate which occurred on Friday last, it is safe to say that no Member contended that the content of the several reports referred to were in accordance with the form and content of the orders of reference to the several standing committees.

However, let it be assumed that one or more of those reports were founded on the estimates which form the orders of reference to the committees, is the Chair able to set aside the procedural machinery clearly and specifically provided for the consideration of reports from committees on estimates? Section 16 of Standing Order 58 is so clear and direct that on that point the answer cannot be otherwise. It reads: "There shall be no debate on any motion to concur in the report of any standing committee on estimates which have been referred to it except on an allotted day."

In the arguments submitted to the House last Friday by the honourable Member for Winnipeg North Centre and by the honourable Member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) it was recognized I suggest, that at least tacitly, that in view of the terms of Standing Order 58(16) the proposed motion in the name of the honourable Member for Winnipeg North could not be moved in those terms and at that time.

It is not my intention to deal specifically at this time with any of the reports for which motions to concur therein have been filed, but it is my feeling that an opportunity should be provided to have these notices of motions withdrawn as necessary and arrangements made to have the subject matter of the report brought under consideration on allotted days. It must be admitted that little time remains for that purpose but it seems to me that no other alternative is apparent.

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Mr. Sharp, a Member of the Queen's Privy Council, laid upon the Table,—Copies of Final Communiqué issued following the Ministerial Session of the North Atlantic Council, held at Copenhagen, June 14 and 15, 1973. (English and French).—Sessional Paper No. 291-6/23.

Mr. Andras, seconded by Mr. Marchand (Langelier), by leave of the House, introduced Bill C-197, An Act to