

It is urged today that, in addition to receiving the report of the committee itself, the House ought to receive not only one minority report which is proposed to be laid on the table by the hon. member for Charlevoix and the hon. member for Matane (Mr. De Bané) but a further minority report from the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce (Mr. Allmand) and, finally, a further report from the hon. member for Lafontaine (Mr. Lachance). In other words, the House, having asked the committee to simplify its task by studying the problem and bringing forward conclusions that would aid the House, instead of receiving that assistance is to be confronted not with one main report of the committee but with four reports. That is really what is proposed.

An hon. Member: Five reports.

Mr. MacEachen: Five reports.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Are you people opposed to ideas?

Mr. MacEachen: It seems to me, if that proposition is admitted, that it will lead inevitably to the conclusion that every member of a committee is entitled to have his report tabled in the House. If that logic is admitted it means that, if one member can move concurrence in his report, every other member can also move concurrence in his report and there will be 10 or 15 contradictory propositions before the House at the same time. I believe that is not what is contemplated either in the minds of hon. members or by the rules. What is contemplated is that when the House receives a report from a committee it will receive the majority conclusions and that will be dealt with by the House. That does not preclude the right of the minority to make heard its dissenting voice, as undoubtedly was done in the committee and as can be done in the committee and as can be done in the House if and when a motion to concur is moved in the House. It is not a formula to eliminate dissent or the right of minorities to express their opinions. It is a practice that allows the House, with the greatest possible simplification of procedures, to deal with one report and still preserve the right of others to make their views known.

I therefore submit, Mr. Speaker, that our present practice is certainly more valuable and more useful to the House than any practice would be that contemplated any member of a committee having the right to table a report, have that report considered and a motion of concurrence moved with respect to it. I realize that there may be strong views as to the future course the committee system ought to take. I believe that the consequences of this matter are so important that it ought to be considered further. For the moment, however, I think we ought to maintain what has been the tried and tested practice followed by the House for a long time.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I notice that there are still as many as six hon. members who want to take part in this interesting debate. As I said, I do not intend to limit the debate because this is such an interesting and important point, but I hope that hon. members will make their contributions as brief as possible.

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Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I agree to some extent with what the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) has said but I would differ in this respect. One of the problems encountered today arises from the fact that too often when committees consider their reports they consider them in camera. The motions that are made are usually made in camera. Opportunities for visible expression of dissent are not available to the extent that they would be in other circumstances, particularly in the House. In addition, Mr. Speaker, another problem we are confronted with is that too often committee reports are not discussed or debated in the House. There is a certain opportunity, of course, to discuss them but it is a limited one. An opportunity for hon. members who dissent from a report to move motions expressing their dissent might be one way of overcoming the problem to which my hon. friend from Charlevoix has referred. I think the right of dissent must be preserved. I know it is not held in high esteem across the floor, at present.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Baldwin: I feel, however, that we should try to preserve it as much as possible.

Mr. Mark MacGuigan (Windsor-Walkerville): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to address a few words to you on this matter, before you render your decision. As much as I might be tempted to agree with the generally persuasive words of many hon. members on this subject, especially those of the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin) and the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce (Mr. Allmand), I submit that the question which is raised today is not precisely the question they have been discussing. If, as I believe that the practice of the house is fairly well established, this is not the time for us to debate whether or not that practice ought to be changed. May I draw to your attention a discussion that took place in the committee itself on this question. On May 5, 1971, the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce moved a motion which was subsequently adopted:

Whereas this committee had discussion as to whether or not members should have the right to append personal minority reports to a committee report and whereas it was suggested that this was contrary to the rules of the House of Commons and the Senate,

Be it resolved that this committee request the House of Commons and Senate for a clarification on this point and if such a right is contrary to the rules of the House and the Senate, that the rules be changed to allow for such personal minority reports.

In pursuance of this matter I contacted the Table and received in reply a letter from the Clerk, which it might be proper for me to table this afternoon. The substantial point made in that letter was that no known precedent exists for a minority report either in our practice or in the practice at Westminster. Citations were given from both Beauchesne and May. I will not take the time this afternoon to read the letter or to indulge in a lengthy procedural argument because I believe the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) has already satisfactorily dealt with this part of the question.

• (1500)

I do not believe the members of the committee felt they were not at liberty, if they wished, to include in the report views which dissenting members had or to mention the