

*Striking Committee Report*

the built-in growth factor of the size of the House, and whether or not it had reached any conclusions? Set against the cardinal rule of this Chamber that a Member shall be heard, were these matters kept in balance, were they discussed and was a conclusion reached?

**Mr. Reid (Kenora-Rainy River):** Yes, Mr. Speaker, when we attended the British Parliament, we found that their select committees, which are equivalent to our standing committees, have about 9 to 11 Members from a House of approximately 635 Members. My recollection is that there are only about 14 of them, as I recall. There are a different series of committees, and these are the legislative committees, and their membership is almost negotiated for each Bill. Therefore, even if one considers the numbers that we have allotted here, amounting to ten for the standing committees, and compares that with the ten Members on the select committees, and the fact that we have about twice as many committees as they have in Britain, one finds that there is far more opportunity for Hon. Members to participate at that level here in Canada.

Concerning the question raised by the Hon. Member with respect to the increase in the size of the House and other changes, we envisaged two processes. First, we tried to provide a range, because we recognized that there would be an increase in the size of the House, but what is more important is that we also decided that the Standing Orders would be under continual revision by the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization and that when the House met for the first time after an election, or at any time, the Standing Orders would be automatically referred to that Committee. We tried to provide a mechanism for an ongoing review of the rules so that problems, as they inevitably came up, could be dealt with as quickly as possible by that Committee.

• (1510)

So the answer to the Hon. Member's question is, yes, we did take into account the generality of the growth. We tried to provide a particular route to have those matters dealt with by a parliamentary committee and we did take into account the problems that he raised.

**Mr. Nowlan:** Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment the Member for Kenora-Rainy River (Mr. Reid) on a most interesting exposition on the background of this particular proposal under review, the proposal of the Striking Committee in terms of the number of Members on the committees. I know he has had a continuing and consistent interest in parliamentary procedure and the reform of Parliament as we both sat on the last meaningful, relevant Procedure Committee some time ago under the chairmanship of the then House leader, one Mitchell Sharp, which committee went first to England some years ago.

I am not beguiled or seduced by the British experience. Quite frankly, our experience in this country and the whole metabolism of this country is fundamentally different from that of the Mother of Parliament. While we have heard some good things, I am not going to follow it down the smokescreen road of just everything in England being the answer here. I know the Hon. Member did not intend that, but my question is

this: because of all the good things he said, the consideration of the numbers on the committees and the surprise that it was acceptable both to Government and Opposition holus-bolus, in total, and the revision under discussion today, does the Member not feel, in view of his interest in parliamentary reform and the continuation of parliamentary reform, that where we get a fundamental cleavage on something that seems as simple as six, three and one or six, four and one, this could pollute further parliamentary reform? As the Hon. Member knows, the number of members on committees was to be between 10 and 15.

Certainly, from the Opposition's point of view, there will be much more careful scrutiny of reports of the Special Committee on Standing Orders and Procedure because there was a feeling on this side of the House that, while there were many good things recommended in the report on parliamentary reform, which has now been adopted for the year, frankly the Committee's consideration really was rather low on the totem pole and still encompassed, in general, a membership of between 10 and 15. It was felt that a dogfight on the addition of one member that is, six three and one or six, four and one, is something with which the House should not involve itself because of the danger that it is going to prevent further reform.

**Mr. Reid (Kenora-Rainy River):** Mr. Speaker, I think the Hon. Member has zeroed right in on it. This is perhaps, in my judgment, the most significant reform of all. Really, what it has done is to shift away control over committees, over the agenda, over the membership—

**Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton):** The subject matter.

**Mr. Reid (Kenora-Rainy River):** —the subject matter, all of that is shifting away from the Party Leaders, from the House of Commons, to the committees themselves.

That is fundamental. It is also very painful and we are all going through it. I agree with the Hon. Member that it seems ludicrous for us to spend a whole day debating whether one member should be added on the committee but, in point of fact, that really means a great deal to a great many people because it has become a symbol for a lot of people who are vaguely dissatisfied and have a dislike for the total package of reform.

I think we should be under no illusions as to what it is we are debating. We are not debating one additional member on a committee. We are debating a lot of concerns that many of us have as to what this transformation is going to do to our political careers and to our political activities in Ottawa. That is what we are debating, and I think it is appropriate that we spend a day debating it.

My answer to the Hon. Member is, briefly: no, I do not believe that this division of opinion is going to be fatal. I think it is very healthy to have this, and I am only sorry that we had to bootleg the debate on the reform that we brought in, in this way, on the floor of the House.

**Mr. Nowlan:** Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question.