

*Interim Supply*

their offices or in the house, on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. On the two other days of the week, Wednesday and Friday, they spend 9 hours a day either in their offices, in this chamber, or in committees. Assuming that members work from 9 a.m. until 10.30 or 11 p.m. on three days of the week and from 9 a.m. until 6 p.m. on the other days, the total adds up to 57 hours a week. In addition, most of us spend time over week ends flying back and forth between the house and our constituencies in order to hold meetings with our constituents. This adds up to a considerable amount of time, especially in view of the very large number of committees we have to attend. I would say that in theory committees are splendid devices.

I will forgo the obvious remarks about calling the devil from the deep and will welcome the Prime Minister of the country to the House of Commons. I suppose it is only fair that somebody should send out for the Leader of the Opposition, the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam and the hon. members for Villeneuve and Red Deer, for in their presence we may yet survive this evening.

As I said, committees are splendid devices. I think it is much more satisfying for a member to work in a committee than in the House of Commons. I do not say this with disrespect to the house but I think more can be achieved in a committee than in this chamber. I concede that the committees are doing important work and from that point of view I do not think that any of the committees is unnecessary. Nevertheless it often happens that committees cannot commence their work because of the lack of a quorum. It happens frequently that witnesses come from long distances to attend committee meetings and give evidence but have to wait 15 or 20 minutes while the assistants to the party whips try to round up the necessary quorum. It has often happened to members that they are called upon to attend more than one committee meeting at the same time so they simply have a tick mark placed beside their names which is sufficient to give one committee its quorum while they attend another. At the start of the year the committee system seemed to be working well and appeared in theory, to be a good experiment, but as we are reaching the end of the year and nerves are becoming frazzled we should consider a new approach to the committee system.

I think that the Minister of Public Works, who is also the house leader, could do a useful job for us by sounding out his fellow house

[Mr. McCleave.]

leaders and starting a study of this matter. I would not want them to form a committee after having pointed out the difficulties into which the committee system has run, but at least they could start the ball rolling and prepare a better system for next year.

As everybody knows, frequently we come under fire from the ladies and gentlemen of the press gallery for our failure to have more than 20 or 25 members in the House of Commons and for the delay in committee meetings starting. And yet they too are only human. It is true, they are human. They are here in numbers now, but frequently it happens that they too do not have a quorum in their gallery. We have sat here often and have only seen one brave soul reporting for the Canadian Press.

Another point I should like to make concerns the housing and construction situation in this country which is becoming very serious. When I go home over the week end I hear prospective home owners crying out because they are not able to obtain money from C.M.H.C. or from traditional lenders. I know of the concern of the Minister of Labour in this regard and I think housing should never become a political issue. I hope he is pressing for a greater supply of money to the home builders of this country.

I should now like to exercise my eloquence by echoing the tough speech delivered rather well by the hon. member for Acadia the other day. Something happened to him this evening. Perhaps he has changed his mind. However, my remarks will be delivered in a constructive mood because if we are reaching the point of no return I would like in the years ahead to be able to live with what I said in this house as recorded in *Hansard* when those words will only be a reminiscence.

However, before I do so, may I be permitted a comment in fun. Some time ago an hon. member rose in this house during the study of the national defence estimates and delivered the following statement. I will ask hon. members to guess who said this:

● (9:10 p.m.)

He is coming here and asking for millions of dollars to be expended and he refuses to give this committee the information to which it is entitled. We demand of him now to give us some answers, or else he will be called upon to reckon before the Canadian people.

Who said that, Mr. Chairman? It was the present Minister of National Defence. Those words are recorded at page 2003 of *Hansard* for March 20, 1962.