

British North America Act

thought it was rather unfortunate that the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) should have had to introduce a motion of this kind. With the increase in the number of members in the house since the establishment of the quorum, those who write the rules should have been automatically influenced to increase the quorum, without any discussion in the house. If the remarks made by the member for Winnipeg North Centre were read outside by the average "Joe" on the street, it would lead him to believe that absenteeism in this house was much greater than that portrayed by the president of Dosco, at a time when he is trying to belittle the efforts of his workers.

I was rather amazed at the opposition of the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Churchill). He based his whole opposition to the rule stating the number of members that could constitute a quorum on the principle that it was compulsory attendance. When we set up a committee of this house to examine legislation or bring in recommendations, the first thing we do when that committee sits is to fix its quorum. This makes it necessary for a certain number of members to be present before business can be transacted. No doubt the hon. member who takes that view has voted for that kind of motion in committees many times since being a member of this house.

In listening to his argument one would wonder as to the purpose for which we are elected. Is it not to attend this house and attend to the business of this country? Surely the present quorum expects a small number to be in attendance. I was looking at this book, Beauchesne's second edition—I am rather reluctant to consult this thing because every time I take a look at it I finish up more confused. I read the first edition and thought I knew a little about the matter. I read the second edition and decided I did not know so much. I looked at the third edition, and decided I would not read it.

On this particular subject, standing order No. 5 is very clear and very significant. It says this, and I should like the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre to listen. It deals with the matter of compulsory attendance.

Mr. Churchill: I did not advocate compulsory attendance.

Mr. Gillis: You said you were opposing the motion of your colleague from Winnipeg on the ground that it meant compulsory attendance. The book says you are compelled to

be here anyway, and you certainly cannot disagree with the book. Standing order No. 5 reads:

Every member is bound to attend the service of the house, unless leave of absence has been given him by the house.

A member has no right to be out of this chamber unless Mr. Speaker tells him he can be absent. I do not see why there is any opposition to this bill at all. It is ridiculous for the matter to be here. I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that without any more discussion or fanfare we just gracefully accept this motion and say it is a conservative approach to the problem to move that at least 30 members who were elected to attend the people's business in this chamber should be expected to be here when that business is being transacted.

Mr. J. L. MacDougall (Vancouver-Burrard): Like the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Churchill), I did not expect to enter this debate except to suggest to hon. members present that when the question of a count-out comes up I hope we do not get into the position where we shall be involved in a Dempsey-Tunney short count or long count.

The hon. member who has just taken his seat has said that he would utilize standing order No. 5 as it is set out in Beauchesne's second edition. This was most illuminating, because I believe it was the first time I have ever heard that hon. member discuss the rules of the house as they are set out in any of the three Beauchesne editions. I thought he, like myself, was one who never really consulted those publications with any degree of sincerity or study. We realize, of course, that the honour in that respect goes to the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre.

However, be that as it may, it seems to me this is not a problem of compulsory attendance. If we are to be fair to ourselves we must admit that if we did not want to be here we would not be here. First of all we asked the electors to send us and, having been sent here, it is our duty to attend. I have a good deal of fun in my discussions back and forth with members in all parts of the house, particularly those from Ontario and Quebec who, because they are closer to their constituencies—much closer than those of us from the Pacific or Atlantic coasts—have to attend certain functions in their constituencies necessitating their absence from the house.

I am not one who will condemn them for that, because such attendance at those functions is part and parcel of our democratic