

Mr. Speaker, I do not think that the main problem is the question of setting the quorum at 23 or 15 members for the committee on agriculture, forestry and rural development. I believe that the government or the house leader should consult the hon. members at the beginning of a session in order to know who is interested in sitting on a given committee. Now, if the government proceeded in this way, some members would express their interest in a certain field and committees would then be able to count on a good attendance at meetings.

● (2:50 p.m.)

Personally, I take this opportunity to repeat publicly and officially my request to the government to be appointed to the committee on broadcasting, films and assistance to the arts, which I find most interesting.

And I do believe, Mr. Speaker, you can testify that since January 18, 1966, I have been among the most assiduous members in this house.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Allard: I hear the laughter of some Liberal members from Quebec who are often conspicuous by their absence.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Allard: So, it is all very well to laugh, but I maintain that each week I have been one of the most assiduous members, and this for one year and a half.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Would the hon. member please resume his seat. I will remind the hon. member that he should restrict himself to the present motion.

Mr. Allard: I am only too willing, Mr. Speaker, if only some Liberal members from Quebec will just keep quiet and allow me to go on.

Over one year and a half, I have proved that I am very interested in the business of the house. I submitted official applications to you, Mr. Speaker, to the house leader, to the whip of the Liberal party (Mr. Pilon), to the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson), and my requests for appointment to the committee in which I am highly interested were not considered.

If the government agreed to heed the wishes of hon. members to sit on such and such a committee, we would not have all those requests to reduce the quorum from 25 to 15, as we have had in the last few months.

Reduction in Quorum of Standing Committee

We would have on these committees members interested in sitting on them and they would share in the work on such committees.

I hope the government will heed my request during this second session. I am here to work. I want to do my share in the work of parliament, not only in this house but in committee. It is my right and the people of Sherbrooke constituency expect the government to give me the opportunity to work in the parliamentary committees.

[*English*]

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker, the fact that the committee asked for a reduction in its quorum at its organization meeting is in my opinion an indication that the standing orders, which were approved only two years ago, are improperly formulated and therefore should be changed to reduce the quorum of the committee to whatever the members agree is a fair and reasonable number. It is quite true that a committee should be able occasionally to reduce its quorum for a specific purpose when events make it necessary, but the fact that the members of the committee asked for a reduction in the quorum at the very first meeting of the committee indicates that our standing orders are not in keeping with the wishes of the members.

Therefore I am opposed to the motion which proposes to reduce the quorum of the committee, because I believe that our standing orders and the practice of the house are not synonymous. I believe the standing orders should be changed to designate whatever quorum the members consider to be reasonable. This is what we should do, rather than decide on the quorum of a committee on an ad hoc basis every time the committee meets.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Auguste Choquette (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, three short reasons why the motion should carry.

First, the agriculture committee met two days ago and we had a quorum of 23. It was unanimously decided to reduce the quorum to 15.

Second, the quorum of 23 members represents a higher quorum than that of the House of Commons, which is not quite normal.

Third, by bringing down the quorum to 15 members, the agriculture committee would still have the largest number, the highest quorum. That is why I feel we should pass the motion. In closing, I say that if every