

(2) Members of the House of Commons who are not members of a recognized party shall be entitled to be a member of two Standing Committees of the House.

The first quarrel I have is why not members of a recognized party? It seems that the objective of a parliament itself should be official neutrality as to whether one is a member of a party or not. We are elected by those who mark their X's on election day to do a job on behalf of the people who elect us and the nation. Why not members of a recognized party? Why not say that any member of the House of Commons should have the right to be a member of two committees? If you happen to be in the disfavour of your whip, why should that be an impediment to membership on a committee? The whip of my party is here. He is giving me a little sly look at the moment. We get along perfectly. He will have an opportunity on April 13 to say something about me in another situation.

The principle of treatment of all members on the basis of equality in terms of participation in committees should be a basic principle of this House. It should be the way in which amendments to rules or statutes should be approached. Those who have said the way to do this is not by statute are correct. The way to do this is in the standing orders of the House of Commons, if necessary. It is to be done by a referral to the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization. An educational process should take place with the members of this place as well as those outside, including the press, the famous fourth estate that does so much to judge all of us. There are not many of them up there at the moment, but now and again we see them at this hour of the afternoon. They have a job to point out the injustices that exist.

The hon. member for Moncton has a valid point that the procedures of the House do not permit him to participate in the committee system on the basis that he would chose to participate. The whole question of the way in which parliamentary government is conducted is really what is at stake here. Why does the hon. member for Calgary North talk about people on this side who show some independence? He called them yo-yo's. He said they are in and out. On another occasion I heard him call them trained seals because they always vote with the party. Could he make up his mind? If he is determined to call people on the other side of the House names, whether they vote for or against the party, that raises a certain credibility gap with respect to the hon. member.

I believe there is a place in parliamentary institutions for those who have independent use of conscience and are prepared to take the consequences in terms of their own careers or as to what their expectations of achievement in this place may be. Surely there will always be some independent people, minds, and spirits, those of conviction, who will win their place by winning at the polls, earning their seats and their place, who will come into this House and find that it is a difficult road that they must follow.

I have watched the hon. member for Moncton in this House. I know what it was like for me to learn the rules when I came here. I had the assistance of a party organization, the whip's office, the assistance of a course which was organized for new

Senate and House of Commons Act

members of parliament and presented by the Clerk of this place. He told us how to go about doing the things we want to do, how to use the facilities that are here. He told us about the customs and the practice—and this is a much more complicated and sophisticated area than meets the eye. I may say it is not always easy to catch your eye on occasions, Mr. Speaker, even when we feel we have something bursting within us to be said, something of the utmost importance to the nation.

● (1510)

I hope there will always be independent members and that the rules will be amended so that independent members, along with all members on both sides of the House, receive equality of opportunity and treatment.

Mr. Gus MacFarlane (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to speak on this bill put forward by the hon. member for Moncton (Mr. Jones). I know the hon. member is most anxious to serve his constituents in committee, and I have always had the highest regard for the work he does within his constituency because I know those people quite well.

I know there has been some concern about my surprise at the turn of events today. I imagine I must have been confused by what appeared in *Hansard* at page 4069. The acting House leader of the Conservative Party asked the government House leader about what the business would be for today. The answer was that we would go on to deal with the report stage and third reading of the bill mentioned. Since no objection was indicated at that time I guess I was fooled into thinking that was what would happen.

However, there was agreement to move on to private members' business. We have done so, and we are considering the bill which the hon. member brought forward. I also realize, on reading that page in *Hansard*, that the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) had inquired about other legislation and, of course, there were indications that people would be out of town and that they would possibly want an opportunity to speak on various bills, so we would not be able to go on with business of that nature today.

The hon. member for Moncton should realize that as far as the whip is concerned it is not a matter of telling people how to think, but there is a responsibility to maintain a quorum. Sometimes people go into a committee and make their speeches and then leave. Attendance drops, and once a committee is without a quorum it is not possible to pass the legislation on which the speeches have been made. Independent members serving on committees might not feel the responsibility felt by the opposition or the government toward a particular piece of legislation. That is one of the reasons for which I would be concerned about independent members sitting on committees. But I do want to say that the hon. member for Moncton is certainly welcome to attend any of our committee meetings. Our chairmen will always recognize him for his comments; it is just that he does not have that official voting right.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.