

Reduction in Quorum of Standing Committee

cannot find 23 members among those who are left to attend the sittings of the committee on agriculture, forestry and rural development, the hon. member for Sherbrooke and I shall go to maintain the quorum at 23 members and then I believe my colleague and myself will set an example and other members of the house will be cozened to attend the serious discussions and we will not be required to reduce the quorum to 15.

Mr. Speaker: Order please.

Mr. Grégoire: Mr. Speaker, that is my suggestion. I repeat, I am not a member of any committee at the present time nor is my colleague, the hon. member for Sherbrooke. There are many others who should be interested in the committee on agriculture, forestry and rural development. I know there are some who attend regularly, but I object to a reduction of the quorum to 15.

Mr. C.-A. Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, having heard the hon. member for Lapointe, I must say that if we had counted on the hon. member for Lapointe last week to reach a quorum, we would have had to go to Expo.

We must act more seriously, Mr. Speaker, and look at things as sincere and responsible men. We insist upon a quorum of 20 members out of 265 in the house, but we do not always have it, and for understandable reasons: it is because the house is in committee and we are discussing matters which do not interest all members.

That is the case precisely in the committee on agriculture, forestry and rural development which is necessarily the most important committee. If the committee, for instance, is considering a matter interesting the western provinces or a province in particular during two or three sittings, members from Quebec, Ontario or Nova Scotia cannot necessarily be blamed for not attending these sittings.

As a matter of fact, when the matter before the committee is of a general nature, when it concerns the whole of Canada, there is no trouble having a quorum; but when the matter is of interest to only one part of Canada, when it deals with agriculture for instance, then having a quorum is difficult.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that we tried on three occasions to get a quorum at last and only after serious discussions was it agreed—I agreed to it myself—to reduce the quorum to 15. I submit that out of 45

[Mr. Grégoire.]

members a quorum of 15 is still quite sufficient to discuss agriculture seriously. I insist on this especially when a specific matter of interest to only one part of Canada, if not to only one province, is considered. Then, should hon. members, who know nothing about the matter under consideration or have no interest in it, be obliged to attend two, three or four consecutive sittings?

Mr. Speaker, I think it is logical to ask the house—we have asked this several times—permission to reduce the quorum to 15, especially if we want to act as serious people and if one compares the required quorum to that of the house.

Why, I ask myself, do the members objecting to the reduction of this quorum not object to the quorum of the house, which is only 20 members and which I have always found ridiculous. Mr. Speaker, I think a quorum of 15 for the committee on agriculture forestry and rural development—and I know what I am talking about, Mr. Speaker—is reasonable and that we can still do serious work.

This does not mean, Mr. Speaker, that we shall always be 15 on the committee, no. If we look at the report of the committee we see that there are always between 25 and 30 members, but let the house give us at least permission to reduce this quorum to 15, so that we can work efficiently and stop canceling one meeting after the other.

Mr. Georges C. Lachance (Lafontaine): Mr. Speaker, in all fairness to hon. members, I think that the hon. member for Lapointe (Mr. Grégoire), who has been absent quite regularly from the house in recent months, is not aware that there are many other committees sitting at this time and that many other hon. members are busy attending those committee sittings.

Mr. Maurice Allard (Sherbrooke): Mr. Speaker, I believe that if we reduce the quorum from 23 to 15, we must take into account the views of the members concerned who are in a position, more than I am, to decide whether it is advisable to reduce the quorum or leave it as it is. But I want to take this opportunity to say that as an Independent in this house, where I must enjoy the same privileges—on a par with all other hon. members—I asked during the first session to be appointed to the committee on broadcasting, films and assistance to the arts. My application was accepted and then, without any reason and without consulting me, the government simply struck out my name.