

Sydneys should be permitted to ask a supplementary. Then there was a point of order raised and we had, by then, gone beyond the time allotted to the question period. I appreciate I have an obligation to the hon. member and I will try to keep it in mind and live up to that obligation tomorrow.

Mr. Saltsman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, since you are keeping in mind the position of the hon. member for Oxford, I wonder whether you would also—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I said that I had taken special note of the hon. member for Oxford, but I always have in mind the hon. member for Waterloo.

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

CONFLICT BETWEEN MEETINGS OF HOUSE AND STANDING COMMITTEE

Mr. McGrath: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My point of order has to do with the business of the House. Today, while the House is in session, there are, according to *Votes and Proceedings*, 14 standing committees scheduled to meet. One committee is due to leave today at 4 p.m. on an important mission to Washington.

According to my calculations, these 14 committees have a total membership of 260. In other words, 260 of us are supposed to be meeting in the various standing committees this afternoon. This represents the total membership of the House, bearing in mind that there are five vacancies. In addition, of course, we must take account of the fact that there are 29 members of the cabinet and Your Honour, your two deputies, the Leader of the Opposition and the leaders of the other two political parties who are not normally called upon to attend committees. It is impossible for us to man all the committees this afternoon because, taking into account the factors I have mentioned, we are reduced to a total of 215. Yet 260 of us are supposed to be meeting in 14 committees this afternoon.

I am asking for your guidance, Mr. Speaker, because I am torn between my obligation to the House and my obligation to at least three of the 14 standing committees which are meeting. If I might be permitted to make one more comment before resuming my seat, may I say it seems that the government cannot manage the business of the country and cannot manage the business of this House either.

Mr. Peters: I wish to support the contention put forward by the hon. member for St. John's East. This afternoon, a number of my hon. friends in this party have been trying to farm out the manning of committees because they are concerned about the subject that the House will be considering in a few minutes time. The difficulty is that if they are replaced they will be replaced by members who have no continuity of attendance at meetings of those particular committees, and committees cannot function satisfactorily in that way.

Meetings of House and Standing Committees

Government supporters may be able to man the committees to the extent of providing a quorum, but I do not believe committees can function satisfactorily along those lines. This is a matter which should be taken into consideration.

I have particularly in mind the committee which is discussing the question of unemployment insurance. It is meeting this afternoon, and several of its members wish to participate in the debate in the House. It is obviously not good enough that members in all parties who are interested in the subject should find that the subject to be debated in the House is also before committees in another form. I strongly urge that the House leaders should meet and resolve this matter before the point is reached where members will say: To hell with the committees, we will pay attention to what goes on in the House. If this happens the level of committee work will deteriorate to such an extent that it will not be worth while for members to attend them at all.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fortin: I rise on the same point of order, Mr. Speaker. I should like to support those who spoke before me on this subject.

Today the House is considering government order No. 78 which would establish a special joint committee—another committee on top of all the others we already have—to find out if we should pass permanent legislation on emergency measures.

Mr. Speaker, we see that today's problem is not new. It logically derives from this government's habit of trying to invite out of the House as many members as possible. Thus, as it has been said a moment ago, more than 14 committees will be meeting today so that over 260 members will be out of the chamber during that time. Mr. Speaker, I feel there is abuse there.

Therefore I should like to make a proposal to the government, namely that the subject matter and the number of members making up the committee be referred to the Committee on Procedure and Organization in order to find a much more flexible system that will take into consideration the members' interests, both in committees and in the House, thus enabling every member to do his work properly in both places.

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker: Is the hon. member for Peace River rising on the same point of order?

Mr. Baldwin: No, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps before I recognize him I should refer to the point of order raised by the hon. member for St. John's East. The submission that he has made is that there is an apparent or obvious conflict between the responsibility of members to the House and to the committees when we have so many committees sitting at the same time as this House is sitting. The point is not new. The hon. member for Timiskaming has made the point and the hon. member for Lotbinière also reminded us of it.