

Justice and Legal Affairs Committee

Mr. Churchill: In other words, give Manitoba a chance.

Mr. McIlraith: That is right.

times make on parliament. Today we have a motion before us by the chairman of the standing committee on justice and legal affairs, and a similar motion by the chairman of the public accounts committee, asking to reduce the committee quorum in a very modest way. An examination of the orders of the day will show the important work that has been referred to the justice committee. It does not appear so clearly in the standing orders, but anyone who follows the references to the public accounts committee will agree on the importance of the work of that committee.

These two committees are chaired by hon. members of this house who have had long experience in committee work and who are also well experienced in parliamentary work. They have come before us today making this request for a reduction in the quorum. While I hope other committees will not generally adopt the practice at this stage of asking for a reduction in quorum, because I have grave doubts whether that is the remedy for the problem, I am not surprised that the problem has arisen; because it was foreseen, at the time the amendments were made to the standing orders in respect of committees, that there would be difficulties; and there will be many more difficulties, I suspect, before the session is ended.

I would ask the house to go along with the committee structure and the new rules for the duration of the session, until we can see whether they are good or bad or what adaptation should be made to them. While I express the hope that other committees will not be prone to come too readily to the house asking for the right to reduce their quorum, I would hope that the motions respecting these two committees could be concurred in and their recommendations adopted without prejudice to any position we may wish to take later on the subject generally, or on later applications for concurrence in similar types of motions.

I want to raise one other point that is concerning me a bit. This is the last day, by statute, for considering the redistribution motions. I would hope, in light of this, that we do not unduly cut down the time for discussion of the remaining objections with regard to redistribution, and either agree to deal with these motions on a voice vote and get on with the other business or, if there is very strong objection to that, stand the debate over until another day so we will not be cutting down on the time for the discussion of the redistribution motion.

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I must say that having listened to the Minister of Public Works I think there will be general agreement with the argument he has advanced. I have on more than one occasion—and this is an opportunity to raise this matter again—expressed the view that if we wish to restore parliament so the people will understand its operations, one means to bring that about would be through broadcasts or television representation of parliament from day to day. I can tell you, sir, that if this practice were adopted in committees as an experiment there would be no difficulty about having a full quorum in committees at all times.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Diefenbaker: This is a matter that later on I intend to deal with at length, but at this time I say that if the committees could agree that when they are dealing with matters of general interest representatives of the C.B.C. and private stations might be present to broadcast the actual performance in those committees, there would be benefit to the people as a whole and to parliament; for there is nothing more condemnatory of parliament than from day to day having recorded in the press that committees have been convened which, in the words of the hon. member for Macleod (Mr. Kindt), were unable to carry on because of the absence of members. This builds among the people of Canada the concept that there is dereliction on the part of members of parliament.

When I mention broadcasting of committees by way of experiment, I do so on the basis of considerations that have arisen in the last few years which in my opinion make it necessary that this whole question be considered by a committee of parliament. We broadcast on television the opening of the Canadian parliament in 1957. It was an experiment. That practice has been followed ever since. The United Kingdom tried it this year and found it of such benefit that at the present time very wide consideration is being given to continuing it in order to bring about something that we all wish, namely a closer relationship between the people and parliament. To this end they are considering having the proceedings in the British House of