Commons. This extends also to committees. No rule says how many members each party shall have on a committee. There is no rule which divides such memberships. Standing Order 65 simply states the maximum number of members there shall be on each committee. We arrive at the number from each party by the process of bargaining; we do this at the start of every parliament.

As my hon. friend said, the tendency of the government when it is in a majority is to insist on a majority in committees, no matter what that may do the proportions from each party. I know that a party of our size sometimes gets a little more than its percentage of members on some committees, and sometimes a little less; but these matters are worked out by bargaining, and I think it should stay that way. Unfortunately because of the position of the hon. member for Moncton, that hon. member has not been at the bargaining table and has not had any chance to make representation. I hope that as a result of these discussions something along this line can be done.

I can say that in some parliaments when we have had more member spots, more memberships on committees than we now have—now we have only one on each committee and that is all—we have given up membership spots to a Social Creditor or an Independent. I make that point because, when we have only one spot on a committee, we can hardly give it up. If the hon. member asks for some spots to be given up, obviously that can best be done by the Liberals or Conservatives who have more positions.

I think what I have suggested should be done. There should be bargaining across the board, bargaining which should include the hon. member, so that he can get his rights.

Let me summarize. I do not think it is proper to write detailed rules into a statute. I would not like to see the Senate and House of Commons Act amended in the way my hon. friend proposes. I think that our rules should continue to stay in our hands and that there should be flexibility in the matter of committee memberships. However, I think the hon. member for Moncton does have a right to have his case considered.

● (1500)

Mr. Lloyd Francis (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, I too am very pleased that this issue has been raised in the House by the hon. member for Moncton (Mr. Jones). The bill that he presents before us is not one that I can support in this form. However, I certainly hope something will come out of this debate and these discussions that will cure what is obviously an injustice.

The whole question of representation of independent members in this House is one that is very proper for this House to review.

The hon. member for Moncton has told me privately once or twice the problems that he feels he faces, first with regard to the financing of election campaigns where the law very clearly discriminates against him. There is no means by which he can currently fund for the next campaign using the tax deductability provisions of the statute. The only way he can do this is at the time the election writ is issued.

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

The other aspect about which he has complained, and I think with some justification, regarding discrimination, is membership on committees of this House. Other members who have preceded me in this debate have pointed out that there is no impediment whatsoever to any member of parliament attending any committee and making his or her views known. The issue of who has the right to vote in a committee is what is involved in the debate which we face.

I would first like to deal with what I consider to be a bit of a red herring in this debate, the question of the numbers. There are 264 members of this House. There are 32 members in the present cabinet, 26 parliamentary secretaries, and three or four persons associated with the office of Your Honour. The numbers of those who would be theoretically available would be in the order of 200. Multiplying 200 by two would make 400 committee posts. Members opposite, including the hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Woolliams) and the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), said there simply are not that many committee positions. I wonder if they have examined the committees.

There are 26 committees listed in Wednesday's *Hansard* of this week. An average of 15 members per committee would require 390 posts, which is just about right. There is nothing wrong with the arithmetic. Those who say there is a mechanical problem have not done their arithmetic. The problem is much more than that. It is well known that not all members of this House are interested in participating in committees. I for one welcome those who do. I find committee work among the more satisfying aspects of the parliamentary experience.

It is quite possible to deal with this issue in the committee structure. I think two committees per member is a good working rule. At times I have been a member of as many as four committees. You do not do much else other than attend the four committees, try to follow the procedure and work of those committees, and work conscientiously on them.

Defence and External Affairs are popular committees. There is a certain glamour attached to them. However, with a committee such as Public Accounts the whips have to work hard to make sure there is a quorum. That committee makes a careful, continuous examination of the report of the Auditor General. The members who participate in such a committee have to do quite a bit of preparation in order to be effective. Continuity is called for there.

Let's face it, the member of parliament who is trying to do a conscientious job in the Public Accounts Committee is not often interviewed on television. If there is a hint of a scandal or irregularity, there are certain members of the committee who show up. They have their own way of making their presence felt, doing those things that often help the member of parliament to be re-elected.

My concern about this bill is the same concern that was expressed by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. I am concerned about a statute. The bill reads:

Section 4 of the Senate and House of Commons Act is amended by adding the following thereto: