

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, June 7, 1967

The house met at 2.30 p.m.

[Translation]

NEW MEMBER

Mr. Speaker: I have the honour to inform the house that the Clerk of the House has received from the Chief Electoral Officer the election certificate of Mr. André Ouellet for the electoral constituency of Papineau.

[English]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRESENCE IN GALLERY OF CHIEF OF
MACNAB CLAN

Hon. J. J. Greene (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, might I take the liberty of pointing out to Your Honour that we have the privilege of having with us in the house today the chief of the clan Macnab, who has come here from his home in Scotland to help Canadians celebrate their centennial and in particular to help the people of the township of McNab in the great and sovereign county of Renfrew celebrate the centennial.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

CONCURRENCE IN FIRST REPORT OF STANDING
COMMITTEE

Mr. Herman Laverdière (Bellechasse) (for Mr. Whelan) moved that the first report of the standing committee on agriculture, forestry and rural development presented to the house on June 1, 1967 be concurred in.

Mr. Gilles Grégoire (Lapointe): Mr. Speaker, once again the first reports of the various committees being tabled include the request that their quorum be reduced. The same request has been made for several years and every time the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) or the government leader promise us that the committee procedure will be carefully reviewed, but it is never done.

The committee on agriculture, forestry and rural development is made up of 44 members and its quorum is 23. The chairman is now

27053—80½

asking that it be reduced to 15, while some members of this house who do not sit on any committee could be appointed. However, the government prefers to have the quorum reduced.

• (2:40 p.m.)

Well, if we cannot find at least 23 members in this house who are interested in agricultural problems, then, what is the use of having that committee? Its quorum, according to standing orders, is 23 members, and we are asked to reduce it to 15. Why? Is it because we cannot find enough members who are interested in agriculture? Is it that not enough of them attend the meetings?

I maintain that attendance at committee meetings is far from satisfactory and that hon. members who are appointed to those committees, especially on the committee on agriculture, forestry and rural development, which is most important, are shirking their duty when they do not attend the meetings. Asking to reduce the quorum is no solution. Instead, committee members should be required to attend the meetings and show an interest in agricultural problems. If they cannot be present, they should ask for a change and make room for those who are interested. Many members of this house should be interested in agricultural problems, but not even 23 could be found to attend the meetings, and that is what I am protesting against. I object to this motion, I am voting against it, because I figure that if we are unable to gather 23 members to attend to committee meetings, it means that most hon. members do not take their role seriously, and that they are not really interested in agricultural matters.

Mr. Speaker, I am not the only one in this house who is not a member of any committee. My hon. colleague the member for Sherbrooke (Mr. Allard) does not belong to any committee either. We take interest in the work of the house, we are willing to be on those committees, particularly on the agriculture, forestry and rural development committee, where very important problems are to be discussed, such as the problems involving eastern Quebec farmers and milk producers. The hon. member for Sherbrooke and I are not members of this committee. I say to the government leader in the house that if we