

Seating Arrangements in Chamber

house last July on the measure which provided for the payment of \$4,000 per year to leaders of parties other than the official opposition. If such a payment were not available I doubt very much whether there would have been the division which has taken place. I therefore express my wonder that he who has received credit for having been the inventor of this plan should now, like so many inventors in the past, decline to share in the profits from that invention.

I pointed out then that the recognition of parties other than the official opposition in the manner I have already indicated was contrary to the basic principle of British parliamentary government, the contemplation of which has always been two parties; a party which governs, and a party in the opposition composed of the largest group. Again I wonder whether the chickens have not come home to roost somewhat earlier than expected. I expressed the fear that this measure might lead to a multiplicity and proliferation of parties in the days ahead. Certainly whatever the cause, the result is as I had anticipated.

If the committee is set up this party will be represented thereon and will make such decisions as in the wisdom of its membership are in keeping with the responsibilities that will rest on the committee. Certainly this committee, with all the potential problems that will be before it, will require all of the wisdom of a Solomon to carry out all the facets of the undertaking that will be theirs.

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, we on this side are happy to support the motion which has been moved and which has been based on the suggestion you made to the house in such impressive terms. We are also grateful to you for the research you have done on this important subject. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker) was good enough to comment on that research in impartial and objective terms. He has reminded the house, in terms which were not too flattering to some of his fellow members and which I think are regrettable, that some chickens are coming home to roost.

He has also reminded us of his prescience and his wisdom in the debate last July on the legislation to which he referred. But I should like to recall the circumstances of that particular debate to the right hon. gentleman, and remind him that in respect of this particular provision and all other provisions in that legislation he managed to find only five of his own party to support him in the house, and those five did not include a single member of his front bench or of his former colleagues in his government. I also recall that

although he had the opportunity he did not move a single amendment to any provision of that bill, including the provision to which he now takes such strong exception; and when I asked him during the debate if he intended to move that this legislation, to which he was then taking exception, be referred to a committee where it could be considered he disclaimed any such intention and did not take advantage of the suggestion I made. Therefore it is a little late for the right hon. gentleman to be so wise in respect of this particular measure.

Mr. R. N. Thompson (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, not only on behalf of the Social Credit party—

An hon. Member: Which one?

Mr. Thompson:—of Canada but also on behalf of myself I wish to thank you for the thoughtful statement you have just made to us. I think it outlines the situation very well, and I agree with your suggestion that it is logical that this situation should go before a committee. The problem is not an easy one for you to decide.

I recall well the discussions we had before the first session of the former parliament began regarding the party order within the house, and I concur in the statement of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre that it was agreed at that time that on the basis of numbers the Social Credit party should take second precedence among the opposition parties. I believe that the proposition he has presented in his motion, provided it is in order, is reasonable.

However, the problem we have before us now is not really just the consideration of who or what a party is. It comes down to the fact that there are a number of people who as far as we know—their views have been expressed only in the press—have decided to break from the party which it is my privilege and responsibility to lead, and that in no way alters the status of the national Social Credit party. On this basis, Mr. Speaker, unless you have some direct word from the members concerned, it would seem to me that you would have to take the action you have taken. The situation comes down to this, that a number of members of our party have chosen to separate themselves from us, and thus they stand before us officially as a group of independents.

It is not for me to define what a party is or what should constitute a party, but there has been considerable discussion in this regard on other occasions. It has been brought out on a number of occasions, particularly with regard to the allotting of time for political broadcasting on the C.B.C., and it has generally been agreed that a party must be