

I am all for reducing the size of certain committees, provided that the attendance will be maintained. In that way a committee can better give the required study to the subject placed before it. Further, the individual senator is unable to serve effectively on a number of committees, and by reducing the membership, the personnel of committees will be selected in the light of the work for which they are best suited.

I certainly intend to support the motion.

Hon. Jacob Nicol: Honourable senators, I have found it rather difficult to follow the logic of some of the arguments that have been presented in support of the motion now before the house. It appears that the leader wishes a small committee to study a certain matter which will be placed before it, and thinks that in that way the members will be better informed. The purpose of a committee is, I think, to inform the members of the house with respect to legislation. Now, how can a small committee be better informed than a large committee? I think it was the honourable leader opposite (Hon. Mr. Haig) who made the suggestion that a small committee would report to Committee of the Whole. But when the house meets in Committee of the Whole to consider the report of a small committee, it will not be as well informed as if that committee had had a membership of say forty.

It seems to me that the purpose of a committee is to study legislation and save the time of the house. There are, in fact, few bills which need to be referred to a standing committee. Why not, therefore, refer a large number of bills directly to Committee of the Whole, and thereby save time? The arguments in support of the motion do not seem logical.

Two or three years ago the rules of the Senate were amended. I objected to the amendment, but I did not express myself in the house. Today a similar resolution is before us again, and although I believe the motion will go through, and I know that the honourable leader has only the best interests of the house at heart, I respectfully beg to differ with him; and this time I want my dissent to be registered.

Hon. C. B. Howard: Honourable senators, I have only a word or two to say. I believe that if we make the proposed change it will be a step backward—as far as the Senate is concerned.

Not long ago, when I was Whip on this side, a certain piece of legislation was submitted to a large committee. Its members sat around the table, and successfully adjusted

differences between two outstanding companies in a manner beneficial to both companies and to the people of Canada. Had the membership of that committee been small, its actions might have given rise to a debate in this chamber, and probably the solution would have been less satisfactory.

To put it another way: if the Senate is a house of revision, whose duty it is to take into consideration the interests of all sections of Canada and watch legislation to avoid injustice to any part of the country, a larger committee is much more representative and serviceable than a smaller committee. If we were to follow through the suggestion of my honourable friend and colleague, it might be argued that another place would be greatly improved if its membership were reduced from 262 to 100.

I am convinced that to adopt this motion would be a move in the wrong direction.

Hon. Arthur Marcotte: I wish to say a word on this motion. I hope the honourable leader will not be offended when I say that it seems to me rather childish. How is it possible to improve a committee by the mere process of reducing its membership? In my experience of twenty years in this chamber, this is about the third time that we have tried to improve things. At one time, after studying the two methods of proceeding—whether by small or by large committees—we concluded that the larger the committee the better.

After all, what is the aim of this resolution? To reduce the quorum? No, because the quorum is to be the same as before. If with a large committee the quorum is about the same, it would seem to follow that the larger the number on a committee the better it can operate. That has been my experience while a member of this chamber.

I always smile when I hear honourable senators talk about operating by means of Committee of the Whole. We have tried that. We have invited ministers of the Crown to appear before us here so that we could get more enlightenment. Did we get it? We never got it.

Hon. Mr. Hugessen: Oh, yes.

Hon. Mr. Marcotte: In fact, only on two occasions have ministers attended here. I remember when one of them—the Minister of Transport, I believe—spoke to us. After the meeting he came to me and said, "Senator, I thank you: you were the only one on your side who listened to me. The others were gone". Why? Because what he said did not interest us, since there was nothing he told us which we did not know before. Much has been said about the benefits to be obtained