

fact for quite a number of years, we had a member on the striking committee one year and they had a member the next, and the member who was there saw to it that the other party got its representation on committees. It is not very important to be there, and hon. members of the Social Credit group can rest assured that they will get just as many committee positions without being represented there as they would by being represented. In fact, they might even get more as we might feel we have to show some generosity.

Therefore, this is not an issue, it seems to me, that should engage the House for any length of time, and certainly should not engage the House for the time it would take to have a division on this motion. But, as the hon. member for Cape Breton Highlands-Canso has pointed out, for the House to take a decision on this motion, whether it is a voice vote or a recorded division, would seem to involve the issue as to whether five members constitute a party for the purpose of a number of things.

● (1650)

It is my view, and I have stated it at the meetings of representatives of all the parties which have been held, that there are several such issues and that most of them should really be decided by Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker was helpful in resolving the question of where the various parties should sit in the House, and I think that it was appropriate that he gave his advice on that issue. The next important issue will be time allotted in the question period, and it is important to opposition parties that they know whether a third opposition party has the kind of status that entitles it to lead off questions, that entitles it to questions every day even though it has only five members. In my view it is something that ought to be decided by you, sir.

If we take a vote today, and the consensus seems to be that this motion will be defeated, then you, sir, will have the decision of the House that on the first occasion when the issue was raised it was felt that we should not give to five members the status of a party.

As the House leader for the official opposition pointed out, we are here to defend each other's rights as individuals to speak, to ask questions and to take part in debate. But there are certain special advantages which go with party status which are at issue. We have provision in the statute on pay allotted to members of the House which indicates that it takes 12 members to get extra pay for the leader of any small party. There is no debate about that. The Social Credit party does not have 12 members and, therefore, its leader does not get the extra pay. That is all that section says. While it has come to be thought that 12 members were required for party status, we over-stepped it when the party had only 11 members last time. Now they are down to five. What happens when it gets down to four, three or two? Can a party that has used a name in an election come here and claim all the advantages that go with party status regardless of how small it is?

Frankly, sir, I am raising these questions without feeling that it is my right to give the answers. I believe that the Chair

should give the answers, especially on such things as rights in the question period, statements on motions and so on. On the question of funds for research, that is up to the commissioners of internal economy. I would think that the part of wisdom would be, in so far as my friends across the way are concerned, not to ask for a vote in this House today, because if we must vote the House will be put in the position of saying no on the first formal occasion that presented itself with regard to five members being treated as though they were a party.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I have to join, on behalf of my colleagues, with the House leader for the official opposition in saying that if this question is to be put to a vote we shall oppose the amendment, but that we shall support the motion presented by the Prime Minister (Mr. Clark), which was what we had agreed upon at a meeting of House leaders. The rights of my honourable friends as individual members we shall defend, but party status is something else. That is our position.

[Translation]

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to make a correction. When you read the motion in amendment, you indicated it was seconded by the hon. member for Bellechasse, although it is stated on the sheet the motion is seconded by the hon. member for Rimouski (Mr. Allard). I would like this to be recorded accordingly in *Hansard*. It would be somewhat awkward for a member to propose himself.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert) is quite right. It is indeed specified that the motion is seconded by the hon. member for Rimouski (Mr. Allard).

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, I listened very closely to the two speakers who spoke before me. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) stated at the very beginning of his remarks this was a committee of little significance and the House should not be asked to decide on such a trifle. This is a committee that meets only two or three times in the course of a session. But if indeed the issue is of so little significance, it follows in my view that we should not be refused representation on that committee. This is simple logic. A member on that striking committee, we always had one in the past and we did not fare any worse.

I understand the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. He is a personal friend, and he always takes care in this House to defend the rights of hon. members, whoever they may be. Indeed I remember that at one time he supported one of my motions so that my party or myself could discharge our duties.

On the issue of my party's status, I grudgingly acknowledge the fact that we are a minority party. But looking at the representation in this House, every party is a minority party. Therefore we are no exception to the rule. It depends on the number of persons. We are all minority parties.