

*Seating Arrangements in Chamber*

order of speakers in debates, the question of the right to move amendments in certain cases, and so on. Therefore we feel it is a matter of concern not only to us but to all members of the house, a matter of concern to all who want the practices and privileges of the house to be respected, that our position, if we are the third party in size in the house, should be that of the third party as far as seating position and other matters are concerned.

As I say, it was my belief and contention that this decision should have been made before we took our places in the house today, and that we should have been given our seats next to the official opposition. However, I recognize readily that to have made such a move earlier than today would have involved other considerations. It would have involved the questions you have raised, Mr. Speaker, as to whether there has in fact been a division of the Social Credit party into two parties, whether they are two parts of the same party or two separate parties, and so on. From what we have read in the papers I find it strange they should be sitting together, cheek by jowl, without exchanging any blows; at least not yet.

**Mr. Gregoire:** No worse than sitting beside you.

**Mr. Knowles:** May I indulge in the use of at least one French word I know, and say "touché".

There is also the question of determining, if we are to be moved up, the order in which the other two parties are to sit. I realize it is unfair to ask you, Mr. Speaker, to make this decision in advance. I think the situation is sufficiently unusual that your suggestion is an appropriate one, namely that this is a matter which should be decided by the house. For these reasons we are prepared to possess our souls in patience for a few days so far as seating is concerned. We are prepared to see this matter referred to a special committee of the house so that the committee may consider it and bring back its findings at the earliest possible date. We do think that if it is established before that date—and one has to get the evidence in order to find out—that there are now three so-called smaller parties and that their numbers are 17, 13 and 11, there should be no question but that the party with 17 should be the third party in the house and sit next to the official opposition. We think that if the committee could ascertain the facts and make a decision quickly in this respect it should do so, and that the change should be made. If it takes longer to decide as between the other two, perhaps the committee would take somewhat longer to determine that particular issue.

[Mr. Knowles.]

I think the house is indebted to Your Honour for having taken the trouble to prepare the statement you have given us today. It is a statement that is likely to be referred to a number of times in the course of the progress of this parliament. One does not know what lies ahead in terms of our parliamentary arrangements. The people of Canada have the right to elect the governments and parties they wish to elect. Nevertheless, here in this house it is our responsibility to see that the arrangements we make with regard to the seating of parties, the priority of speakers, the moving of amendments and so on are made in accordance with the best practices of parliamentary democracy.

Therefore it gives me pleasure to move a motion along the lines suggested in the latter part of Your Honour's statement. I move, seconded by my hon. friend from Burnaby-Coquitlam:

That the matters raised and the statement made to the house this day by Mr. Speaker be referred to the committee on privileges and elections and that the said committee be instructed to report its findings thereon to the house with all convenient speed.

**Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition):** First may I say that I think Your Honour has done the house a great deal of benefit by the research which has been shown in the production of this statement you have just made. I was particularly interested in the quotation you made from Burke, the title of his speech being "Thoughts on the Causes of the Present Discontent". It was very applicable and it was an example, once again, of history reliving itself, though in a manner not within the contemplation of Burke at the time he made the speech in question.

The responsibility which will rest on this committee will be a great one; to determine when is a party not a party; when does disagreement within a party cause such a cleavage as to proliferate the number of parties within a party.

**An hon. Member:** It might happen to you.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** I might say also, to my friends on the left, the question might arise as to whether the New Democratic party is a separate party or whether it is just a section of the Liberal party ready to vote with the government on occasions or to abstain altogether. These are all questions which will, I am sure, be of tremendous interest as this committee carries out the responsibility which will belong to it should the house pass the motion before us.

However, I must say that all of this, all these events, underline and emphasize the danger I pointed out when I spoke in the