

For my part, I am strongly opposed to a reduced quorum on the committees.

**Mr. Alexis Caron (Hull):** Mr. Speaker, I listened attentively to the remarks of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) and the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra (Mr. Deachman).

It seems to me that something is lacking. I am told several members sit on two or three committees at the same time. I know some who are members of two or three committees but do not attend any of the meetings.

I feel that the committees are made up of too many members. As the member for Vancouver Quadra said, the number of members as well as the quorum should be reduced. I am hoping for a general rule, and not a rule providing for exceptions applying to some particular committee or other. I do not like rules of exception and have never liked them. We are occasionally forced to tolerate them, but where rules of exception are concerned, you never know where you stand.

It might be a good idea for the leader of the government to come to an understanding with the leaders of the other parties in order to reduce the committee membership. Moreover, before we appoint someone to a committee, we should ask him whether he has any intention of attending; if not, he should not be appointed. Those who do not have time to sit on the committees should not be appointed; they should be left aside.

This is the reason why I ask for a much greater caution on our part. We appoint committee members right and left. We appoint Mr. So-and-so without telling him; when the time comes to sit on the committee, the whip is informed that the gentleman in question is not interested and that he wants to be replaced by Mr. So-and-so. We replace him by Mr. So-and-so who is not anymore interested than the previous one.

If the membership of our committees did not exceed 20, with a quorum of ten or eight, they might operate normally. This is why I ask the leader of the government to get in touch at once with the leaders of other parties and that the request made by the hon. member for High Park (Mr. Cameron), be denied.

[*English*]

**Mr. Lawrence E. Kindt (Macleod):** There are just one or two matters in respect of the committees of this house that I should like to

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bring to the attention of this chamber. There is more wrong with committee operations than those problems relating to quorums. I suggest there is a basic problem relating to the organization of committee meetings. These committees apparently have been set up for some reason of which I am not aware. They have no responsibility, but operate for the purpose of keeping backbenchers quiet, happy and perhaps satisfied.

The second point I wish to make relates to the difficulties of committees obtaining quorums. The Minister of Transport (Mr. Pickersgill) may laugh, but he will laugh from the other side of his mouth before I finish speaking. He seems to be subject to fits of laughter, perhaps because he was the author of this motion. I hope he will have something to say about it, because I think he was working with those who were considering the matters in question.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** I deny the paternity.

**Mr. Kindt:** Many of the matters discussed at committee meetings are rehearsed in this house. For that reason the committees have no authority or responsibility and the members have no incentive to attend their meetings. I believe our committees are absolutely useless, and until the government of this country which is responsible—and I include the minister who is laughing—gets down to brass tacks and establishes these committees with some responsibility and purpose, they will not function as they should or serve the purpose which they are intended to serve.

It is my belief that our parliamentary committees could be as useful a part of parliament as committees are in other places, including the United Kingdom and the United States congress. In Canada our committee system, as I have said, is useless.

There is one other aspect of this matter I should like to mention. Someone should be appointed to schedule the meetings of these committees so that a member who wishes to attend a committee meeting will not find himself faced with the necessity of making a decision as to which of three or four committees he shall attend because several are sitting at the same time. Obviously such a member cannot help to form quorums on three committees which sit simultaneously. I mention this fact to indicate why I believe there is no organization behind committee meetings. This organization, or lack thereof, and the responsibility for it rests squarely on the shoulders of those hon. members who