

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, December 18, 1974

The House met at 2 p.m.

[English]

## PRIVILEGE

MR. HORNER—REFERENCE TO LACK OF QUORUM IN HOUSE ON  
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 17, 1974

**Mr. J. H. Horner (Crowfoot):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege affecting a number of members in this House. At approximately 5:30 last evening, it was brought to the attention of the Chair that a quorum was not present in the House. The House, therefore, closed for the remainder of the day. Those members present were asked to come to the Table and sign the register to prove that they and no other were in attendance.

I think this situation reflects a little on the diligence and respect one has for his job as a member of parliament, in light of the fact the House had to close because there was not a quorum.

I wish to inform Your Honour and other members that at that time the Standing Committee on Agriculture was sitting. At precisely the same moment, about 29 minutes to six o'clock, a roll call vote was taken in the agriculture committee, which is really an arm of this House of Commons and under the jurisdiction of Your Honour. The roll call indicated 20 members present. The chairman, although he did not vote, was present. The witness was a member of parliament. This makes a total of 22 members who did not have the opportunity to sign the register, although they were on duty at 5:30 last evening. It should be made perfectly clear to you, Mr. Speaker, that far more than 17 members of parliament were serving their constituents at that time.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Allan Lawrence (Northumberland-Durham):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same question of privilege. By coincidence, there was a recorded vote in the finance committee at approximately the same time yesterday afternoon. There were 18 members of the House present. Even though the House was not sitting, the justice committee sat until approximately 10:30. I should point out to Your Honour that no NDP members were present at either of those committee meetings.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

● (1410)

[Translation]

**Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière):** Mr. Speaker, I raise the same question of privilege because, when the clerk was asked to count the House, we were dealing with Bill C-216, a bill which was put on the order paper under my name

and which is of paramount importance to my colleagues and myself.

The Social Credit Party was represented here by 20 per cent of its manpower, the majority of the others serving on committees, while the remaining two were held up on board busses by snow storms in Quebec. These two are the hon. member for Villeneuve (Mr. Caouette) and the hon. member for Abitibi (Mr. Laprise). It took them 16½ hours to return to Ottawa, while NDP members were preventing the House from carrying out its duties, while killing a private member's bill. That is why, Mr. Speaker, I take the opportunity of this question of privilege to emphasize the regular presence and unceasing work of Social Crediters in the House, in the hope that NDP members may realize that they are not carrying the load, and that they would do well to follow the example set by Social Crediters.

[English]

**Mr. Hal Herbert (Vaudreuil):** On the same question, Mr. Speaker. The employee-employer relations committee was also sitting at the same time yesterday and there were no members of the New Democratic Party present at that meeting.

**Some hon. Members:** Shame!

**Mr. Peters:** On the question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Crowfoot, I should like to draw the attention of Your Honour to the fact that I did not have the opportunity to record my vote in the Standing Committee on Agriculture, to which reference has been made, as I was in the House.

**Mr. Orlikow:** Mr. Speaker, I rise simply to correct the impression given by an hon. member on the other side who said there was no NDP member present at the meeting of the committee on employee-employer relations. I was at that meeting, taking the place of my colleague, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), and remained throughout that meeting.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. A number of contributions have already been made respecting the question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Crowfoot, who gave me notice of his intention to bring the matter before the House. The point is a serious one and the representations which have been made have been taken seriously.

However, as hon. members know, before a question of privilege can be sustained there would have to be some kind of interference with the right of hon. members to function as members of the House. The fact of the matter is that whatever took place yesterday at twenty-nine minutes to six, or whenever it was precisely, the rules of the House, according to precedents, and according to the interpretation placed upon the Standing Order with respect to a quorum, were strictly enforced. It is therefore