

Public Accounts Committee

consent to a reduction of the quorum of committees. Committees are appointed with 25 members and a quorum of 13, and we believe that the quorum should not be reduced.

Mr. Lambert: Then attend the sittings.

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Unanimous consent must be obtained in order to present the motion, and there can be no debate because there is nothing now before the house.

Mr. Starr: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. Speaking as a private member of this house, I believe there are individuals here who continually stymie the work of parliamentary committees.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Starr: I cannot understand why, after asking for positions on these committees, when a committee report is presented for concurrence these members object to the suggestion that these committees sit while the house is sitting. As a private member of parliament I feel that the work of these committees should be carried out and that they should have the right to sit while the house is sitting. Any members who are not willing to do their work should get off the committees and be replaced by those who are willing to share the work.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Caron: Mr. Speaker, I protest what has just been said by the hon. member for Ontario (Mr. Starr). We have rules and I always objected, in opposition, to the committees sitting while the house is in session. I have nothing against a committee sitting when there is a special reason, but I do not intend to give full powers, and I shall refuse to do so until the end of time.

Mr. Grégoire: Mr. Speaker—

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Basford: Mr. Speaker, I rise on the question of privilege. I have only one question to ask of the hon. member for Hull (Mr. Caron). How many committees is he on, and how often have they met?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

[*Mr. Grégoire.*]

Mr. Caron: That is an unfair question.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. A few minutes ago the Chair expressed the opinion that there was nothing before the house and there should be no discussion, but we have managed to have one in any event. I suggest there is really no prima facie case of privilege, and I invite hon. members to continue to the next item of business.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Grégoire: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege, which is quite genuine. The hon. member for Ontario (Mr. Starr) has accused those who objected to passing this report immediately with wanting to keep the other members of the house from doing their work.

I feel that accusation warrants a question of privilege. I must say to the hon. member for Ontario that we do not want to keep anyone from doing his duty; on the contrary, we want the work done well. Now, the work will be done well provided the majority of the committee members attend the meetings. That is not done by reducing the quorum. We are opposed to reducing the quorum and to having the committees sit while the house is sitting, unless exceptional circumstances warrant it. In my opinion, that is not preventing the members of the house from doing their work.

Mr. Lambert: Set the example.

[*English*]

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PROCEDURE FOR CONSIDERATION OF OBJECTIONS FILED WITH MR. SPEAKER

Mr. J. B. Stewart (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, I have been asked, in the absence of the government house leader, to report on the results of a house leaders' meeting which was held this morning. This meeting considered the objections filed with Mr. Speaker pursuant to the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act. The house leaders have agreed:

1. That the standing orders providing for private members' hour be suspended while the motions for consideration of objections to reports by electoral boundaries commissions are before the house.