

Study on Manpower

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): For the benefit of hon. members who seem to get a great deal of satisfaction out of the fact that I called attention to there not being a quorum and then went behind the curtain myself, I would refer to paragraph 60 of Beauchesne's fourth edition, which is to be found at page 48. We are now being told that we are going to play it according to the rules, and if hon. members will look at page 49 of Beauchesne they will find these words:

An honourable member need not remain in the house after giving notice that a quorum is not present.

Therefore, what I did was in accordance with the rules. The rule provides:

Any member may direct the Speaker's attention to the fact that there is not a quorum present. The Speaker will proceed at once to count the house—

I repeat, sir, "at once".

—and if there are not 20 members present, including himself, the Clerk will take down the names, and the Speaker will then adjourn the house without question first put until the usual hour on the next sitting day.

I submit that when the Clerk Assistant counted the names after I had drawn attention to the fact that there was not a quorum in the house, many of the members who are now here were not present at that time. What counts is the number of members present at the time the question is raised.

An hon. Member: You were not present.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I was, and then I went out. I exercised my right under the rules. You want new rules around this place, and if you want to work to rules, that is what we shall do. The Chair waited five or seven minutes until more members came in, and then there was a list of 26 members. But when I raised the point of order there were, on a liberal count, 14 members in the house, perhaps even fewer than 14. I submit that the rule has not been complied with, namely, that there has to be a count at once. A count five minutes later does not meet the rule.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) will have noticed that I was not in the house when he raised the point of order. The point having been raised, I was called back to the [Mr. Speaker.]

house, as the Speaker is in such circumstances, and when I returned to the chair I was advised by the Clerk Assistant that he did follow the instructions in the citation referred to by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), that there was some confusion when he made the count immediately because some hon. members were coming into the house and others were leaving.

The hon. member will realize that I was not here and I did not make the count. I have to go by the count which is given to me by the Clerk Assistant. The Clerk Assistant assures me that it was difficult, if not impossible, at that moment to determine exactly how many members were in the house. If I had been in the chair and it had been evident to me when the count was made that there were fewer than 20 members present, I would have had no hesitation in applying the rule contained in citation 60 of Beauchesne's fourth edition.

I wonder whether I have any alternative but to accept the suggestion that a count was made and that this was followed by the usual taking down of names, which indicated there were more than 20 members present. I am placed in a difficult position; I have to accept the count which was taken by the table and about which I have been advised. I wonder whether the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) would not agree that I have no alternative but to follow this suggestion.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): You have no alternative, sir, but to accept the statement that was made to you by the Clerk Assistant when Your Honour reached the chair. That would be a report on the number of members then present. But I submit that we have the right to know—

Mr. Pilon: You are still on western rules.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):—what report the Clerk Assistant made to the Acting Speaker who was in the chair at the time this matter was raised. There is no doubt about this. We were behind the curtain; there wasn't a quorum before we went out, but when we went out the attendance dropped to about seven or eight. There was a total of only 14 members present when I raised the point.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I am satisfied that when the Clerk Assistant