

committees. It is an advantage to have a large committee, because the men who are interested in the matter will turn up, and you will have less trouble in getting a quorum. But you have the greatest difficulty in getting them to turn up to discuss something in which they are not in the least interested, but in which other members are very vitally interested. I would suggest that the remedy is, as I said before, to leave the committee as large as before, but to reduce the quorum, and if we could possibly get into the way of holding committee meetings on Friday and Monday, it would do away with a great deal of the trouble we have in getting a quorum.

Mr. MARCIL: This amendment was based on a recommendation made to us by Mr. Todd, who has been the Clerk of the Committees of this House for forty years. The intention is to reduce the membership. These large committees, such as the railway committee, with 135 members, are unworkable. The more members you have on a committee, the less work they do, and our object here is to distribute the work among all members of parliament so that each member will not have more than two committees at the outside to attend, and perhaps only one. What happens in practice is that two or three committees of which you are a member will be sitting at the same hour in the morning, and it is impossible in such a case for members to give their undivided attention to the work before them. We therefore invited Mr. Todd, with his forty years experience as Clerk of Committees, to prepare for us what he thought would be a workable system, and this is the result. I think it should be tried before being changed.

Sir GEORGE PERLEY: I would say to my hon. friend from Comox-Alberni that all the members of the House have the same kind of difficulty that he suggests. We are all of us interested in all the committees at times, but we cannot all be members of all the committees, and I would remind him that as a matter of custom and etiquette a member can always go to a committee of which he is not actually a member and listen to the proceedings. As a matter of fact, even though he be not a member of the committee he is attending, I have never known a member to be refused a chance to speak on a subject if he wished to do so. He has not the actual right to speak in a committee of which he is not a member, but I have never known permission to be refused.

Mr. NEILL: My hon. friend is speaking from his experience, and I am speaking from

mine. I have seen permission refused several times in the few years' experience I have had in this House. I can give him a case in point. It occurred in the railway committee. I was not a member of that committee, and I proposed to make some remarks in it, and I was called to order. The point of order was raised whether I was entitled to make any remarks, and I know of another occasion when the same rule was applied, and properly applied, to another member. So far as having the right to go in and look on is concerned, we can all do that in a police court, or in the Supreme court, but that does not give us much say in what is being done there. The man who butts in on some particular phase of an inquiry that is being held by a committee of which he is not a member gets very small attention. He is not allowed to cross-examine the witnesses, or to vote, and he is accepted as being simply an onlooker. That is all the good it does him. My hon. friend points to what has always been the custom; but we are living in an age of progress. There are five parties in the House, now, and some consideration should be given to that.

Sir GEORGE PERLEY: My hon. friend's experience has been different from my own. It seems to me the exception proves that the practice is all right. Each committee must have full control over its own deliberations, and if I go into a committee of which I am not a member, and for any reason that committee feels I should not be allowed to speak, that is their right, because they have full control of their own proceedings.

Mr. NEILL: I do not want to go into a committee of which I am not a member. Why do you suggest I should go?

Sir GEORGE PERLEY: I did not suggest that. I simply said that I have never known a case where a member of the House was refused permission to speak in a committee of which he was not a member. My hon. friend's experience has been a little different, but I am sure that does not often happen.

Mr. KELLNER: I think the members of the House will recollect that the former member for Brant, Mr. Good, introduced a resolution in this House for reducing the membership of committees, and he appeared before the committee revising the rules of the House two years ago, and made a considerable impression on the committee. I think every member of that committee was convinced that his argument was sound, and that the membership should be reduced. He had gone to a lot of trouble in getting statistics as to