

*British North America Act*

system. Unfortunately those of us who come from the far Pacific or the Atlantic are in the position that, while we would like on many occasions to be back in our constituencies to attend particular events, because of the 3,000 miles separating us from our constituents we find such attendance at those events impossible.

As a second termmer in the house I might say that in the twenty-first parliament I noticed as a freshman that to the best of my knowledge there was no occasion when the count-out was used. I know, as a whip from British Columbia, that when membership in the chamber got low it became my responsibility, and that of others holding similar office without emolument, to see that members were brought here.

I do not consider this situation too seriously because, regardless of our individual opinions in the matter, we must always keep in mind the type of representation meant by a quorum. One could quote from Webster or from other dictionaries in seeking a definition of a quorum. I think, however, that from a practical standpoint the people of Canada generally consider a quorum to be the irreducible minimum of membership present in the house whereby the business can be conducted in a proper manner.

Let us permit it to rest there. In the last parliament, and I expect we will have a similar situation in this one, there has been good representation from Tuesday to Thursday. I am sure that hon. members who are not present on any of those days have always had excellent reasons for their absence. Then we come to the last sitting day of the week, at which time duties call members to the various constituencies which are located reasonably close. They find that they make the return journey over the week end, perhaps extending into the following Monday.

If we were to add an additional ten members to that irreducible minimum by which the business of the country can be transacted, what would it mean? It would mean that those from the far east and the far west would be the ones who at the first and the last of each week would hold the bridge. Since 1867, the year of confederation, we have gotten along very nicely with a quorum of 20 members. It is true that the membership of the house has increased but, as was pointed out by a previous speaker, they have a quorum of only 40 members in the old land, with a membership of 625.

I am expressing only my personal views when I say that the main issue is the business of the house; and if, as has been proven, that business can be conducted on the basis of a

[Mr. MacDougall.]

quorum of 20 members, I can see no legitimate or valid reason why at this time we should increase the number from 20 to 30.

The electorate of Canada are not particularly concerned whether it is 20 or 30 or, indeed, 130. They are interested in the results accruing from the deliberations of members of the House of Commons in respect to the welfare of the country.

On motion of Mr. MacDougall the debate was adjourned.

**Mr. Speaker:** The hour for private and public bills having expired, at eight o'clock the house will resume the business interrupted at five o'clock.

At six o'clock the house took recess.

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### AFTER RECESS

The house resumed at eight o'clock.

### CRIMINAL CODE

#### JOINT COMMITTEE TO REPORT ON SPECIFIC MATTERS RELATING TO THE CRIMINAL LAW

The house resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Garson:

That a joint committee of both houses of parliament be appointed to inquire into and report upon the questions whether the criminal law of Canada relating to (a) capital punishment, (b) corporal punishment or (c) lotteries should be amended in any respect and, if so, in what manner and to what extent:

That 17 members of the House of Commons, to be designated by the house at a later date, be members of the joint committee on the part of this house, and that standing order 65 of the House of Commons be suspended in relation thereto;

That the committee have power to appoint, from among its members, such subcommittees as may be deemed advisable or necessary; to call for persons, papers and records; to sit while the house is sitting and to report from time to time;

That the committee have power to print such papers and evidence from day to day as may be ordered by the committee for the use of the committee and of parliament, and that standing order 64 of the House of Commons be suspended in relation thereto;

And that a message be sent to the Senate requesting that house to unite with this house for the above purpose and to select, if the Senate deems advisable, some of its members to act on the proposed joint committee.

(Translation):

**Mr. Dufresne:** Mr. Speaker, it is not my intention to delay the debate, but, as I stated this afternoon, I would like to give my humble opinion on the matter now before the house.

It is obvious that crime is increasing in Canada as well as in all countries of the world. I shall not attempt to mention all the reasons that lead to crime or to murder.