

*The Address—Mr. Reid*

At the same time I would like to comment on the election of Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think it is high time that the practice of sharing high positions in the House of Commons between parties was adopted and continued. I hope that in succeeding parliaments this precedent that we have begun will be continued. I think that the person who now holds the position of Deputy Speaker has been particularly well chosen.

Further, Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not congratulate the Deputy Chairman of Committees and the Assistant Deputy Chairman of Committees, both of whom served well in the last House of Commons, on their re-election to those positions.

This brings me to an important point which has to do with the committee system as it will operate in this House of Commons in which there is no majority. It has been the practice since the committee system was revamped under the government of the late Lester B. Pearson that, with the exception of the Public Accounts Committee, chairmen of committees have been drawn from the party with the largest numbers in the House. It was always my feeling that this was an undesirable precedent, because the role of a chairman of a committee is analogous to that of yours, Sir, in the House of Commons, in that the committees are microcosms of the House of Commons with the parties represented on them in proportion to their strength in the House. The role of the chairman of a committee ought to play should be that of Mr. Speaker in the House of Commons. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, it seems that, given the standings in the House of Commons, we have an opportunity to try to revise the way in which chairmen have been selected.

• (1200)

The suggestion I would put forward is that Mr. Speaker, in conjunction with either the whips of the various parties or the House leaders, should develop a panel of chairmen from both sides of the House, including all groups in the House of Commons, who would serve as chairmen of these committees. I think this would be a valuable precedent. It would give experience to a variety of members in the functions of the House of Commons; it would provide a valuable training ground for individual members to learn the rules and to train for important positions such as the role you now play, Mr. Speaker, the role of Mr. Deputy Speaker, Chairman of Committees and Deputy Chairman of Committees. I think that this kind of precedent could only strengthen the House of Commons particularly at a time when the role of the Chair and the role of the chairmen of committees are going to be of particular importance to the smooth functioning of the House. I think it would also be a happy advance toward building on the precedent which has led, I would hope, to the continuing development of a permanent Speakership of the House of Commons and the bipartisanship of the office of Speaker of the House of Commons with the inclusion of Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Recently the redistribution commission for Ontario made a series of recommendations regarding that province. The riding I represent, Kenora-Rainy River, is one of the largest in Canada. Unfortunately, under the recommendation of the boundary commission that riding would expand by approximately one-third even though, if one

[Mr. Reid.]

looks at the population figures for northern and northwestern Ontario, it would be possible to have the same number of seats available instead of the present recommendations under which we will now lose two seats, one for northern Ontario and one for northwestern Ontario. It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that the rural ridings in Canada, not only of northern and northwestern Ontario but all across Canada, are too large.

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

**Mr. Reid:** The workload for rural Members of Parliament is simply becoming far too great for them to handle and for them to exercise all the responsibilities they must when they become members. The reason is quite simple. By their very nature rural ridings do not have large centres which can provide the government services so badly needed. That means that the people depend more on their Member of Parliament than do those in larger communities with a variety of government services. The workload is different and I would say that the workload of a rural Member of Parliament is far in excess of that of an urban member.

This development is unfortunate. It seems to me that the redistribution commission has gone a step further in the way in which it has attempted to divide Ontario by creating urban ridings and has left vast rural ridings without any natural communication centres through which the people can contact their member. In my own case I would have to work out of both Winnipeg and Thunder Bay in order to provide proper communication with my constituency. There is no large centre in my constituency which means that the scattered population does not receive that kind of representation to which they are entitled to receive from their member. More important, Mr. Speaker, they do not reap the full benefit of the services of either the federal government or the provincial government because of their isolation and the distance from the larger centres of communication from which government operates. It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that they do not receive proper value for their tax dollars because of this diminution of services.

I think the way in which the redistribution commissions have been operating works against the rural areas and makes it difficult for them to benefit from the development programs of the government, for example, regional development expansion. It makes it almost impossible for Members of Parliament representing such areas to participate fully in the work of the House and to provide national representation in their areas. The Member of Parliament is responsible for being the linchpin between the federal government agencies, provincial government agencies and his constituents. The workload becomes very heavy.

Parts of the Speech from the Throne could be entitled "What I have learned from the last election". I think we all learned a great deal about how people feel about government, not partisan politics, but the way in which government is carried on. One of the things which has bothered me is the expansion of governments into areas in which they were not before. There has been a tremendous feeling of uneasiness in that what the government says it can do is not in fact being done. The people feel that govern-