

Supply

There has been some discussion here about patronage in the sense of other appointments. If one looks at those, one gets a sense of why Canadians have reason to be unhappy about what happened last fall and reason to support the motion before us today. If the question is answered as it should be, it will give the Government reason to apologize to the Canadian people.

Government can all too easily become the private property of those who hold the levers of power, those who have the seal of state and those who have the power of appointment. In our parliamentary monarchy, that power resides largely in the hands of the Prime Minister and the Privy Council Office, the Prime Minister acting with the advice of his own office. When we contemplate what occurs in the patronage appointments, whatever number they may be, in these Order in Council appointments, and judgeships have been suggested, and the fact that the federal Cabinet, on the recommendation of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice, has incredible power in the appointment of justices across the country and within what would seem to any newcomer to be provincial judicial systems, we see that it is only an indication of the large power of appointment which the Government has had from the time of Confederation. It has been used time after time for partisan advantage. It has been used time after time for just the sort of gain for the friends and relatives of Government which we are protesting this afternoon.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: That is shameful. Name names.

Mr. Epp (Thunder Bay-Nipigon): The Government uses its power of appointment in order to appoint supporters and friends, even without people having any great amount of qualification.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: That's McCarthyism. Name names. What judges do you suggest are political hacks?

Mr. Epp (Thunder Bay-Nipigon): The fact that we have this power of appointment without any parliamentary check on it gets us to the heart of the difficulty.

Mr. Andre: Your performance does not give us much confidence in Parliament.

Mr. Epp (Thunder Bay-Nipigon): If we were going to have Government acting properly, we would have the credentials of persons being appointed considered by a committee. That committee would determine whether in fact these persons deserve to exercise the powers that are there.

One need only think of the boards of transportation organizations which have received a good deal of government attention in the last while, most recently the boards of Air Canada, CN, VIA Rail. We have seen persons appointed to those boards whose credentials certainly include friendship with the Prime Minister, support for him in years past and limited knowledge in some cases. One knows quite definitely of the industry that they are going to be responsible for, the company on whose board they sit. In those cases, we have every reason to ask if a parliamentary committee which would consider the credentials of these persons would in fact decide that they

deserved the appointments, or would it not in fact refuse to vote for the endorsement of some of those appointments? If we had such a structure, there would be no necessity for anyone to shout at me that I name names or anything of the sort. We would have a parliamentary committee encouraging the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) to consider candidates properly and to appoint people with qualifications. When we consider the companies involved, which are large Crown Corporations and commissions of various sorts, and when we know that the responsibilities here are of enormous importance to the nation and to Canadians, we want people with expertise. If it is not necessary to have expertise, then we create sinecures.

● (1610)

In centuries past, the British parliamentary Government offered a great many sinecures. After all, Adam Smith himself spent much of his time writing *Wealth of Nations* while holding one of those sinecures. A lesser mortal was appointed to do the work and the greater mortal in effect went on a pension. I must say that most of these sinecures were a lot less productive than the one held by Adam Smith.

If boards do not have important work to do and if knowledge of one aspect or another of an industry is not required in order to become a member of the board, then we have, in the most abominable way, another system of pension. Ordinary Canadians are very interested in these matters because they know how very limited their incomes are if they depend on Government. They have suffered at the hands of a past Government which twice brought forward restraint programs designed to reduce incomes, and this happened with the support of Conservative Members.

The people know if they live on pensions how adequate or otherwise those pensions are. If they are forced to live on unemployment insurance benefits or social assistance, again they know exactly how prosperous they will be and they know of the inadequacies in the Canada Assistance Plan, a plan which, in co-operation with the provinces, forces people to live at income levels which are open invitations to immorality and crime. In such circumstances, Canadians have a considerable interest in exactly how fat the friends and relatives of Government will become at the public expense.

It is that kind of standard that the Government House Leader might want to contemplate. He can grow very indignant, as he did a few moments ago when he put on a reasonably effective show, but his constituents too would like to know why some people manage to do so well under what can easily become Conservative privilege while ordinary Canadians, who would like to be able to make some contribution to the well-being of their communities, are held back, constrained and driven to desperation by the actions of the Government. In the Province of Ontario, one can cite the provincial Conservative Government's 42 years of damnable governing as much as one can now cite the new Government with its great power.

The larger patronage question and the more specific matter of the abuse of power to enrich some at the expense of the Canadian nation are the kinds of issues that are before us. I