

*The Address—Mr. McCutcheon*

this subject which I hope to elaborate upon a little later.

• (4:40 p.m.)

Later on during the debate the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Sullivan) whom I am delighted to see in the House, came up with a blueprint for a new constitution. As I understood his words, he seemed to favour a congressional style government. He even had specific suggestions concerning the division between the executive and the legislative branches of government. It sounded very much like Washington, D.C. being moved here to Ottawa. Now, lest anyone suggest for one moment I am being critical of either of my friends to whom I have referred, let me say at once such is not the case. I know they are concerned, and rightly so, but I submit the answer to the problem lies not in bewailing the fact and offering no solution, as was the case in respect of the hon. member for Sarnia, nor in abandoning our tried, true and proven systems for those of another country. I took from the speech of the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain that that was his suggestion. The congressional system of our neighbours to the south, in my humble opinion, has not been such a howling success that I would be anxious to trade in our model for one of theirs. No, Mr. Speaker, the answer is not as drastic as these members would have us believe.

I think the answer can be found much closer to home. All that is required is a little more intestinal fortitude displayed by the backbenchers in this House, particularly the backbenchers on the government side. I will come to that later also. I believe the majority of the new government backbenchers came here with a desire to participate and, even further, a wish to be non-partisan in their approach. After all the new members had every reason to believe that was what they were getting into. They knew their leader had been in different political parties, so they reasoned they could do what they thought should be done. They believed they were not tied. How long did that dream last? It was soon dispelled. Those ideas of being non-partisan, those dreams of statesmanship without party label and those suggestions in the press of forgetting politics and getting on with the nation's business have all been forgotten.

We were told a new era was dawning with the accession to power of a new majority government. The new era was dawning alright, but not the way the new members of parliament had envisioned it. We were told

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that new emphasis would be placed on the committee system, that committees would be less formal than the committee of the whole used to be and that we would get right down to the facts. We were also told there would be non-partisan examination with the help of experts. I have been a member here since 1963, and this sounded good even to me. Alas, I should have known better, even though the new members could not be expected to. What happened? This quotation, allegedly made by the hon. member for York East (Mr. Otto) when he was writing to his constituents, covers the situation pretty well:

The government members of the committee have been instructed to make no changes to the bills coming before the committee and to vote exactly as they are told by the government.

This I submit does not square very well with the words of the hon. member for Sarnia who wants to have the House filled, the committees to have a full attendance, everyone to be in his place and everyone set up like chess men. Why? Is there to be an opportunity for debate or are members just to be there to rubber stamp the wishes of a tightly-knit, ever-expanding executive group within the cabinet? The answer to the attendance problem that seems to weigh so heavily on the mind of the member for Sarnia is not to be found in the constitutional change panacea of the member from Hamilton, but in a renewed spirit of intestinal fortitude by government backbenchers who must resist being kicked around by the executive, even though that executive has the prerogative of dispensing favours.

I suggest there never has been a more dismal record of committee reports than those emanating from the last session of parliament.

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

**Mr. McCutcheon:** We might take the public accounts committee as an example. I was a member of that body for some period of time. We found out about the buses that had to have a hole cut in the side to get at the spark plugs. Investigation proved that those were pretty good buses after all, but they required a simple and inexpensive modification. We held innumerable hearings regarding the so-called extravagance of the refit of the *Bonaventure*. We studied the navy's hydrofoil. We learned all about the fire on board and how the costs had escalated just as much and more in building the hydrofoil than they escalated for the Arts Centre. The committee found out what the Auditor General