

*Motion for Concurrence in Report*

any committee? Let us fool no one, Mr. Speaker. Many of us have seen the system operating over the years; it has been made use of by this government and governments before it. The majority of committee members are handpicked for the committee by the government house leader, the Prime Minister or the government whip, to do a job for the government.

**Mr. Gilbert:** Right.

**Mr. Woolliams:** They form the majority of that committee. Say that an item comes before that partisan committee having to do with part of the government's expenditures of \$11 billion. Let us get down to practicalities. Suppose some of us want to find out why the cost of the performing arts centre has risen from \$16 million to about \$50 million. Supposing some hon. members of the N.D.P. or the other opposing parties want to ask some embarrassing questions. Someone may allege the government has been negligent, and so on. We ask our questions and pretty soon the partisan committee chairman rules us out of order. Then what happens? One of us may object, a motion is passed to say the committee chairman is right, and there is no appeal. We cannot appeal the chairman's ruling to Mr. Speaker. Yet there is an appeal with respect to matters brought up before the chairman of the committee of the whole house to Mr. Speaker. You, sir, are well trained and Mr. Deputy Speaker also is well trained. Committee chairmen are not. Often they are members who have been elected to this house for the first time and who have never before seen the inside of a committee room. So the hanky-panky takes place.

This house is asked to approve of a measure which will allow \$11 billion of expenditures to be scrutinized by committees of this kind. As I said the other day, they are nothing but kangaroo courts; they are nothing else. The Prime Minister maintains a majority of government members on all committees he is interested in. The government members are loyal servants who look for patronage and political plums and they vote as they are told to and obstruct any questions that might embarrass the government. If one of the boys steps out of line he is removed from the committee. The hon. member for Middlesex (Mr. Lind) was on the agricultural committee and did something to embarrass the government. Without any consent the party whip took him off that committee. But the hon. member for Middlesex is not to be put off so lightly; he objected in the house and was put

[Mr. Woolliams.]

back on the committee. Unfortunately there are not enough men here with the integrity of the hon. member.

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

**Mr. Woolliams:** Ministers do not always appear before committees and I do not object to that. Top civil servants are presented to be examined, and in this connection may I tell the house of my experience earlier this week. The vice-chairman of the National Energy Board appeared before the standing committee on national resources and public works, and I wanted to learn why there had been a cut-back in the export quotas of crude petroleum from western Canada, something which goes to the economic heart of Alberta, as the hon. member for Calgary South (Mr. Mahoney) knows. I wanted facts. That top man could not give the answer—not that he did not know it but he did not want to embarrass the government. The only way to get the answer is to ask the minister.

Surely it is not asking too much when we say that 20 per cent of the estimates each year should be brought before the house at the request of the parties in opposition, with the consent of the government, in order that certain matters may be aired in parliament. I repeat, if you take control of the pursestrings away from parliament you destroy parliament. It is dead. Take away control of the pursestrings and you make the executive all-powerful. When the executive controls parliament only about half the intelligence available to the opposition can be brought to bear on the consideration of financial matters. The opposition is more or less silenced and parliament becomes a rubberstamp.

The late Mr. Lapointe, a former minister of justice, a distinguished French Canadian and a Great Canadian, had some interesting words to say on the subject. I hope that every member of the government will read what was said by one of the great Liberals of Canada. He was speaking at that time against a Conservative prime minister. Always remember we can never have good government if we have government by people rather than by laws. This is what Mr. Lapointe said:

• (4:00 p.m.)

It means we are being asked to agree to be dragged at the wheels of the Prime Minister and to make parliament an appendage of the executive. This attitude of the Prime Minister makes our duty to resist this legislation more imperative. The first duty of parliament is to remain a parliament, not to become a subservient and ornamental