

*The Address—Mr. McGrath*

That right, Mr. Speaker, I submit is being taken away from us by the roster system. It was only today, this third or fourth day of the new session, that it was pointed out that 25 per cent of the ministers were absent.

What about Standing Order No. 5, Mr. Speaker? Standing Order No. 5, which is still part of our Standing Orders, very simply says:

Every member is bound to attend the service of the House, unless leave of absence has been given him by the House.

I know, Sir, that this Standing Order has been taken under advisement by the Speaker. I know this matter has been raised on a number of occasions, but I believe this Standing Order was left in the rule book precisely for the reason to which I am alluding, namely, that no group of members may be absent from this House at any one time without the express consent of the House. But that is precisely what is happening under the roster system. When a group of members, especially a group comprising members on the treasury benches, are absent from this House then I, as a member of the House, am being deprived of my rights. This is nothing short of being deprived of my rights—it is contempt.

**Mr. Jerome:** Would the hon. member permit a question?

**Mr. McGrath:** I would be glad to allow the Parliamentary Secretary to ask questions when I conclude my remarks.

The other provision I would ask the Standing Committee to take a long, hard look at, an earnest and sincere look at, is a provision which in my opinion is making the committee system inoperative in terms of providing collegiality, if you like, and expertise amongst the members of the committees. It is the provision whereby the membership of the committees can be changed. This is Standing Order 65(4)(b) which reads:

Changes in the membership of any standing, joint or special committee may be affected by a notification thereof, signed by the member acting as the Chief Government Whip, being filed with the Clerk of the House who shall cause the same to be printed in the *Votes and Proceedings* of the House of that sitting, or of the next sitting thereafter, as the case may be.

That rule should go, Mr. Speaker. That rule must go if the committees of the House are to work effectively and if they are to work properly. Otherwise, we will continue to have this roving parliamentary goon squad which does nothing else but move into a committee where it feels the government is in trouble. This squad votes at the direction of the government, and then moves on to do its dirty work in the next committee.

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

**Mr. McGrath:** I say that is an obnoxious and reprehensible rule, and it should be taken out. If a member wants to get on a committee he should do so by resolution of this House. There is no other way that he should be allowed to sit in a committee which is charged with the responsibility of examining bills and the spending estimates of the government.

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

[Mr. McGrath.]

**Mr. McGrath:** Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that we at least give consideration to restoring just a part of our traditional rights and prerogatives. We can do this by making provision to bring back into Parliament certain predetermined departmental estimates, without any time limit on their passage. This would be done by agreement of the different house leaders. These estimates would come before Parliament, and would be examined by the committee of the whole house, without a time limit, so that members could give voice to their grievances, question government expenditures, and indeed withhold voting money for a department for that year unless they received a legitimate explanation with respect to their grievances.

If we did that you might see a lot more interest in this chamber by members of the Treasury Board than is now manifest.

**Mr. Woolliams:** And an effective opposition.

**Mr. McGrath:** And you would probably have a more effective opposition, more effective Members of Parliament. This institution would be restored to its traditional role. Mr. Speaker, democracy in Canada is indeed threatened. Democracy in Canada is threatened because the government chooses to do away with Parliament very surreptitiously by taking away its rights, prerogatives and privileges. Until these rights, prerogatives and privileges are restored, then parliamentary democracy in this country is a farce and freedom is threatened.

**Mr. Jerome:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member was kind enough to say he would permit a question at the end of his remarks. I wonder if the hon. member is in a position to commit his party to a general review of the rules by the Procedure Committee. That seems to be what he is anxious for, and I am sure he will find a good deal of support for that in the House. However, so far his party has resisted. Can the hon. member commit his party to having a general review of the rules by the Procedure Committee?

**Mr. McGrath:** Let me answer that question by asking the new Parliamentary Secretary if he is prepared to commit the government to the same?

**Mr. Jerome:** Certainly.

**Mr. Ricard:** What authority have you got?

**Mr. Jerome:** That isn't an answer.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel):** Order. The hon. member for Sudbury (Mr. Jerome) asked a question. He cannot make a speech at this time. I now call on the hon. member for Fort William (Mr. Badanai).

**Mr. Hubert Badanai (Fort William):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to join those who preceded me in this debate in congratulating the mover (Mr. Trudel) and the second-er (Mr. Douglas (Assiniboia)) of the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne for their well conceived addresses. By all standards, the Speech from the Throne was one of the best to which I have had the privilege of