

who desires to see patronage eliminated more than I do. Patronage has been the curse of politics in this and other countries. It is what induced some people to call politics "une sale cuisine," or a dirty business. But it is not necessary, I respectfully submit, to appoint a commission of this sort to get over the difficulty. There are purchasing agents in every department, and one way to get over the difficulty would be for these purchasing representatives of every department to have an association whereby they would communicate the necessities of their several departments to one another and see that one was never bidding against the other in buying supplies, or if it is necessary to go still further—and my experience of public matters is not sufficient to enable me to state whether it is or not—a purchasing department might be formed composed of well-paid and intelligent civil servants, and presided over by the minister, who will be responsible to this House for what that purchasing department does.

The minister said that ministerial responsibility would not be affected. I am sure the minister is frank and fair in his mind, and I put this proposal to him: Let us suppose that he wished to have a waste paper basket for his office as Secretary of State, and he requisitioned one. This commission, with large ideas, and believing that ministers from the West desire expensive waste paper baskets, went out and bought, we will suppose, a mahogany waste paper basket for about \$40, as was done for one of the ministers from Saskatchewan the other day. Now the minister says, "I would be responsible for that purchase." He would not be responsible. He would be responsible for asking for a waste paper basket, and responsible that a waste paper basket was bought, but he would not be responsible for the price paid for that basket, because if he was attacked for buying a trifling waste paper basket for \$40 he would hold up his hands and say: "I come from a country where such extravagance is regarded as disgusting, and the responsibility for buying that \$40 waste paper basket rests on the shoulders of the independent commission appointed by this House. If you feel that this waste paper basket matter is of sufficient importance, then if a joint petition of the House and the Senate is carried in both Chambers we can remove the commissioners from office." No, the responsibility of asking for the goods will be on the minister, I frankly grant, but the responsibility for the price paid for the goods will be upon the commission and not upon the minister.

What does this mean? This Bill is just a reflection of what governments have been doing in this and other countries. Administrations have got rather tired of ordinary members of Parliament; they are in the way, and things cannot be done as quickly as they could be done if ministers could only have their own sweet will. In Great Britain commissions have been formed ad libitum. They have been created in large numbers in this country, and one of the duties that falls upon the representatives of the people in this and other countries is to see that the House of Parliament resumes its functions, that it shall no longer be a rubber stamp for what the ministers desire to do.

In one sense that is not the great question. In another sense it goes to the very root of the matter. Are the ministers desirous of avoiding responsibility? In the days gone by heirs to thrones and princes must not have their teachers' hands laid upon them. They had "whipping boys", and if the young prince did not know his lessons the "whipping boy" got the flogging. If ministers do wrong when purchases are made, if improper prices are paid for the supplies which are bought, what will the ministers say? They will say: "Turn to the whipping boy, turn to the commission; it is not our fault."

Mr. BUTTS: What are the objections to the Bill?

Mr. McMASTER: The great and main objection to the Bill is that it takes away from the ministers the responsibility which they should assume for the prices paid for the things that are bought for the public service. I have no more to say. I believe the whole subject is summed up by these few remarks. Perhaps the minister who preceded me will at least absolve me from any of the strictures he may in the future make in regard to the length of speeches on this side of the House.

Mr. ROWELL: Mr. Speaker, for five or six months, in the absence of the Prime Minister, it was my privilege and responsibility to keep in touch with the work of this commission and my experience of its work so convinced me of its advantages that I was led to believe that the House would accept the proposal contained in this Bill without very serious objection or discussion. That accounts for the fact that in introducing the Bill I did so with a few brief observations. I believe I am right in supposing that it is because the members of the House have not had an opportunity of learning the value of the work which