

ment of Newfoundland in the very department charged with the responsibility of administering the program under regional development.

We know of other instances where committee chairmen have been the stooges of the government. For example, when a committee brings in a unanimous recommendation to this House which just does not fit in with the government plans, and is not acceptable to the government, the committee chairman quietly acquiesces to the wishes of the Government House Leader. All that the committee chairman needs to do is to remain seated and not rise in his place to move a motion of concurrence in the hope that the report will die. Fortunately, Mr. Speaker, that has not been allowed to happen because of the vigilance of the opposition in this House. Members of the opposition on more than one occasion have moved concurrence in committee reports, only to have the motion for concurrence talked out by government members. Then, the motion has been put on the order paper as a government measure and allowed to die a slow death.

The report of the Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development which studied the question of sovereignty in the North was moved by the hon. member for Athabasca (Mr. Yewchuk). It was talked out by the government and died on the order paper. I can think also of the report of the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications dealing with the problem of transportation in Labrador and the north shore of Quebec which presumably was destined to die by virtue of the lack of a motion for concurrence by the Chairman. The motion was moved by the hon. member for Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador (Mr. Peddle). The motion was allowed to die. I could cite other instances to illustrate that the committee system is a failure as it is now constituted. It is an absolute failure and it is destroying Parliament. Let me quote the hon. member for York Centre (Mr. Walker) who is one of the Parliamentary Secretaries who have been put out to pasture. I am quoting from the *Financial Post* of July 9, 1970:

The new committee system is working excellently, so well that it is superseding the work of the Commons. With so many committees (24) operating there is difficulty in getting a quorum in the House itself. That is a bad situation.

There are no committees sitting today.

**An hon. Member:** Yes, there are.

**Mr. McGrath:** Well, I apologize. Perhaps there are one or two committees sitting. This still does not alter the fact that the government and its members choose to ignore the debate which is taking place at this moment of great crisis.

When the new rules were adopted by Parliament there was a debate, as indeed there should have been because these rules as we now see them would have the effect of taking away our rights and prerogatives. A solemn undertaking was given by the then President of the Privy Council that the rules would in fact be reviewed. I shall throw this undertaking right back in his face. I am talking about the former President of the Privy Council,

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the present Minister of National Defence (Mr. MacDonald) who is involved with soldiers on Parliament Hill at the present time. Perhaps that is why he is not in the House. The minister's remarks appear at page 3792 of *Hansard*. I quote:

I would be glad to give an undertaking on behalf of the government that after we have had experience with these suggested standing orders for the balance of this session, we would at the commencement of the next session in September or October of next year, be prepared to refer these amendments to the new committee on procedure and organization, which I trust will be established by this motion. That committee could consider these procedural changes if not within one year, within at least nine months later.

That brings us to the present time. In other words, Mr. Speaker, a solemn undertaking was given by the government that it would be prepared to take a long, hard look at these rule changes after they had been in operation for a short period of time, so drastic were they in their impact. Now, Mr. Speaker, I call upon the new Government House Leader, the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen), who has been called upon to pull predecessor's chestnuts out of the fire, to try and restore some of the lost prestige of this Parliament that has been taken away by the actions of the government. I call upon him to fulfil that undertaking made by his predecessor to refer these rules back to the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization, and to take a long look at the committee system of this House.

• (4:10 p.m.)

I suggest to him that consideration should be given to the following: That committees should not under any circumstances be allowed to sit without a quorum.

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

**Mr. McGrath:** That, Mr. Speaker, in my opinion is fundamental if this whole committee system is to be anything but a farce.

Secondly, I suggest to the government through you, Sir, that committees, except under special circumstances which have been predetermined by the House, should not be allowed to sit while the House is in session. I consider that to be a fundamental condition.

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

**Mr. McGrath:** Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, we must give consideration to doing away with the roster system in this House—

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

**Mr. McGrath:**—which, more than anything else, is taking away the rights and privileges of Members of Parliament—

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

**Mr. McGrath:**—our inherent rights to represent our constituencies, to represent the people of Canada and to direct questions to the members on the treasury benches.