

a view as I can—and result in the aggrandizement or enlargement of the powers of the executive in the House of Commons itself.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Hear, hear.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): I am astonished that even the suggestion of such a thing should come from a Liberal prime minister.

Mr. T. L. CHURCH (Broadview): I would support this motion if I thought it would cause immediate action and help in getting on with the war. But I fear it is going to have the opposite effect. We in this house have been slow to see how the executive, known as the cabinet, have been usurping the functions and privileges of parliament. The present government got along without a parliament for a year less eighteen days, except for four or five days last September. We might just as well abolish parliament altogether if we are going to refer the question of war to the Minister of Finance's committee and stop any criticism of it. They criticize war mistakes in Britain and France.

The committee system has been weighed in the balance and, in my opinion, found wanting. We have had illustrations. What is parliament for? What are the functions of parliament? Parliament is a place where the people whom we represent can address their grievances to the government and have them dealt with by 245 members in this house. It is a place where the country can get facts, something they have not been able to get so far about this war; where they can get facts about government policy, about immigration, about trade and tariffs and finances and the way the country is run. There is no other place where the people through their representatives can get these facts and the government's explanation of federal policies. They cannot get them from the press or radio; they can get them only from one agency, where the press and radio should get them, must get them in part, namely, from the government of the day. Under our parliamentary system the responsibility is on the government of the day for laying down a policy, and their responsibilities and trust should not be shunted off on some committee or side show.

What is this committee system? We were told that if the Canadian National Railways estimates were referred to a committee we would find out the facts and have some control, but the big I's were not restrained, they kept on building big hotels and all kinds of branch lines almost to the sun, the moon and the stars. When you entered the committee what did you see? I went to the committee

[Mr. R. B. Hanson.]

four or five times; they invited me once, and once was enough. Members sat around a table, more than two-thirds of them smoking the pipe of peace and passing everything—a whitewashing affair.

Now, if we are going to deal with the bill of the Minister of Finance about the war by referring it to a committee we might just as well close parliament right now, and there will be no criticism or redress of grievances. Think what criticism did in France, the glorious country to whom civilization owes so much to-day; how it speeded up action. They are practical people, they know the world in which they live, they can appreciate the present struggle, they know what Germany is because they have lived beside her for thousands of years. In France they get reforms not by shunting things off to a committee but by the chamber of deputies taking them up and forcing the government to speed up the war on land, at sea and in the air before they grant supply. I am just referring to the committee system.

I had a resolution along the very same lines as this motion in the sessions of 1937, 1938 and 1939. It called for a committee to take up the whole question, in view of the foes within the country and outside. It proposed to reorganize our parliamentary system, our constitutional system, our cabinet system, our legal system; to bring our system of government up to date to meet modern conditions. This resolution proposes to amend the Senate Act. That is an old plank from the platform of the Liberal party—senate reform. Do they propose to refer the selection of senators to this committee? They were to reform the Senate; how did they reform it? They made it worse than it was before. It was proposed in this house in the dying days of the session in June last year that instead of the crush and crowding of the opening in the senate they should use this chamber for the opening day. But the government would do nothing. Now they propose to deal with the Senate Act. The resolution is not broad enough to deal with Canada's main domestic problem, namely parliamentary reform, constitutional reform, cabinet reform, law reform. In the old country they had reform of the House of Lords; we want senate reform and law reform. We are miles behind the old country all along the line. Four years before the war Britain acted and reorganized her parliamentary and legal system, with the result that she was ready.

I have seen some of the results of these committees, their reports received in the dying days of the session. What happened here three days before parliament closed one