

*The Address—Mr. R. Stewart*

the people of Canada sent us here they did not intend to choose again in a matter of months a new group to govern them. They sent us here with the idea of our serving their interests for the next few years. This is the way it ought to be.

If we are to play the kind of games that have been played up to now, I can see no possible advantage for the people of Canada. I certainly cannot buy a system under which a minority group such as the NDP in this parliament, with fewer than 12 per cent of the seats in this House, shall decide what legislation shall be brought down and keep one or other party in power. It seems to me that in that situation the tail wags the dog.

**Mr. Alexander:** Oh!

**Mr. Baldwin:** Some tail; some dog.

**Mr. Stewart (Cochrane):** That is not democracy.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Baldwin:** It is a son of a dog.

**Mr. Stewart (Cochrane):** I do not say this because it involves the NDP; I would say the same if the Créditistes or anybody else were involved. Under a democracy, the majority should rule. In this case we are trying to operate under a two-party system with four parties. It seems to me that the people of Canada cannot help but suffer as a result. I think that is the only thing that can happen. On one hand you have a group which has power tentatively and is afraid of losing it; on the other hand there is a group that wants it. Then on the third hand there is a group that wants to use its position of balance of power in order to get the kind of legislation passed that it has in mind.

The people of Canada did not elect fewer than 12 per cent of the members of this House in order for those members to decide the legislation of this House. Therefore, I cannot see why this kind of system should last any longer. If we go back to the country in the next few years, there is no guarantee that we will be returned to this House with any one party holding an absolute majority.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Want to take any bets?

**Mr. Stewart (Cochrane):** It seems to me that the time has come to change that tradition. We are great on traditions which are not our own. One tradition which I have abhorred in the past, and I will mention it again since it involves the traditions of this House, is the tradition of traipsing down the hall to the Senate to listen to the Speech from the Throne. Most of us have to watch it on TV because we cannot get in the door. If that is not ludicrous, I do not know what is.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

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**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Mr. Baldwin:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask the government House leader what the business of the House will be tomorrow.

[Mr. Stewart (Cochrane).]

**Mr. MacEachen:** Mr. Speaker, we will continue with this debate tomorrow.

**PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION**

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40 deemed to have been moved.

**CONSUMER AFFAIRS—FOOD PRICES—SCOPE OF TERMS OF REFERENCE OF JOINT COMMITTEE**

**Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville):** Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to pursue a question that I put to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Gray), on Friday last regarding the reference in the Speech from the Throne to the establishment of a special joint committee of this House and the other place to study the price of food. I wish to take a few moments this evening to enunciate some of my ideas as to what I think this House should consider in the establishment of such a committee. I want to mention some of the terms of reference that are important with regard to the committee, if it is to study food prices and recommend action on legislation which has teeth in it and is effective.

• (2200)

The first point I wish to make is this. I do not think it is necessary to include members of the other place on a committee of this nature. My leader referred to this point. He said that if they wish to appear as directors of certain companies to which they belong, that would be fine. A committee of this sort could and should be made up of members of this House and this House alone.

The announcement in the Speech from the Throne is welcome to me. I do not know why the government waited so long before introducing a measure of this sort. The price of food has been increasing sharply for the past 12 months. In the last year it amounted to more than 10 per cent. But it was not until October 30, when the government found out that the land was not strong, that action was taken; until then hon. members opposite shrugged off this important question.

I recall, in recent months, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) suggesting that an increase in food prices might not be bad because higher farm prices would benefit from it. I wish to remind hon. members through you, Mr. Speaker, that farmers are not reaping the benefits of the increase. Net farm income has declined over the last five years and the farmers' share of the food dollar has dropped drastically in the last 20 years. In 1949 the farmer received 57 per cent of the food dollar; in 1972 he received only 38 per cent.

This is the time, therefore, for a thorough investigation into the increase in the price of food. We must find out who is getting the benefit of this increase for which the consumer is paying. I believe the House should move immediately, tomorrow, to the formation of the committee. I urge the minister to contact the House leaders of all