

*The Address—Mr. McCutcheon*

concur. But having the right to govern and not listening to dissenting opinions are two different things.

I submit that the two or three examples of the ineffectiveness of our committee system that I have given should be sufficient reason to call for a complete re-appraisal of the system. But I predict that instead of that we will be called upon soon to provide for some committee to sit while the House is sitting, to travel from place to place, to hire counsel, and to hire experts to advise it. With a record like our committees have established I, for one, will find it very difficult to agree to any of these requests.

If the committee system is to be continued the power of the committees must be strengthened. Committees as presently constituted are the creatures of the government, under direct supervision and control of the government. Does anyone actually believe that legal counsel hired at, say, \$200 a day by these committees is really hired to serve the interests of the Tories, the Socialists or the Creditistes? If you do, then you probably also believe with Charlie Brown in the Great Pumpkin.

No, Mr. Speaker, the answer to attendance and to interest in the goings-on in this place lies in returning some degree of responsibility to the members of the committees and of this House. Ever since I have been here, there has been a steady erosion of the power and rights of the individual member.

I know that the hon. members opposite, particularly the new members, will say that my examples of the ineffectiveness of committees are really not relevant. They will say, "If our Liberal party thinks things should be that way, then that's O.K.; that must be right because the cabinet says so. They have given instructions to our committee to do exactly what cabinet wants done. We'll do it and point out to the public that parliament isn't really relevant."

I say to hon. members opposite that if they want this institution to be relevant, as the hon. member for Sarnia suggests, then the authority and the decisions of committees must be strengthened. The private members must say, "No longer will we allow our rights and privileges to be over-ruled by the executive."

If we want the American system of committees, then each party will have to have its own legal counsel and its own expert witnesses. This will not bring an end to the Liberal government's pork-barrelling. It will

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not end the patronage, but it will cut down the percentage, and at least the Tory, Socialist and Creditiste taxpayers will not be supporting only Grit experts.

Our committee system is nothing more than a joke. The flow is in the wrong direction. Instead of taking opinions from the grassroots to the cabinet, the flow goes the other way. I have offered a couple of examples of what I mean, but in case anyone has any doubt let me close by quoting from the Speech from the Throne:

The government believes that the time has come to extend the franchise in federal elections and it will therefore recommend to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections of the House of Commons that the voting age be lowered to eighteen.

This example clearly shows what I mean about the flow of authority, the flow of recommendations. Gentlemen, it is going in the wrong direction.

● (5:00 p.m.)

**Mr. Gerald Richard Cobbe (Portage):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to make a few brief comments about my constituency and its problems, which I feel I have an opportunity and obligation to put before the House. First of all I should like to congratulate the hon. member for Sarnia (Mr. Cullen) and the hon. member for Lapointe (Mr. Marceau) for their contributions to the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne. There is always a great deal of controversy about the Speech from the Throne and one wonders where and why it originated. It appears obvious, however, that it was the intention of the government to put forth its program. The job of the government increases tremendously from year to year and it is difficult to set out piece by piece the legislation proposed; therefore, it must be dealt with in generalities. For those who find difficulty in understanding, it is sometimes easier if it is not spelled out in detail, but for those who are sincere in trying to understand the aims of the government for the year ahead it is reasonably simple.

I should like to take this opportunity—my first—to acquaint hon. members with an outline of my constituency because I feel it has certain characteristics which will give some meaning to my later comments. The constituency of Portage in the province of Manitoba is located in the centre, east and west of the province because the province of Manitoba is located almost in the centre of Canada, east