

The Address—Mr. J. B. Hamilton

until we see the whites of the opponents eyes lest we might fire at the wrong group.

Many words have been spoken, of course, about the speech from the throne but it seems to me that we cannot adequately talk about it unless we go back and assess the problems which faced this administration at the time it first took office last year and see what progress took place in the interim and what is now suggested as a plan for attacking some of those problems. We are in a very peculiar position today because for the first time I think we have seen a change take place so quickly that suddenly all political parties seem to agree on what the problems were.

It may have been that prior to June 10 there was some difference of opinion. But immediately the post June 10 period commenced we found that all parties agreed on the problems that faced us. I refer specifically to such items as the state of affairs in the House of Commons, the question as to how this body should carry on its business, as to what might be done to help the members of the group. The next problem deals with the treatment of old age pensioners, of the sick, the veterans and such people, and after June 10 we found that there were many recommendations from all parties, since the problems facing those people were serious ones. Furthermore, we had the situation where the provinces had met with almost complete foreclosure in respect to their attempts to obtain fair and equitable treatment from the federal government and that problem was also raised by the members of the new opposition after June 10, 1957. We also had the problem of the conduct of foreign affairs and investigations as to why we appeared to have lost contact with our best friends overseas and, to a certain extent, with our best friend on this continent. We had the problem of trade, a situation where we were carrying on business with a billion dollar trade deficit each year.

In addition to that we had a situation where more and more of our own resources were owned outside this country. Also we faced a continuing pile up of western wheat crops and, in connection with the trading position, the growing problem of unemployment. Lastly, many statements were made about development in this country, statements from all parties as to what was required to bring about the type of development which we would all like to see here.

What have we done and what are we prepared to do further to the speech from the throne in connection with the first problem, namely, the House of Commons? We have heard today the Prime Minister (Mr. Diefenbaker) say that he is prepared to see that all

[Mr. Hamilton (York West).]

members of this house have a full and equal opportunity of taking part in deliberations and in the setting up of special committees where, in one case, he recommended a member of the opposition being made committee chairman.

This is a new look in so far as this House of Commons is concerned and I think it is an indication that no longer will the scrutiny of the affairs of our people be limited to the decision, if you like, or the will of the majority alone. I think it is a very firm answer to the many editorials and the cries of havoc which arose in the opposition press on the morning of April 1; as a matter of fact the last result was hardly in before we were told that this massive majority in Ottawa was going to be a terrible thing. Let me say this: I do not think it is the question of numbers which determines the effectiveness of this House of Commons; I think it is the true spirit of this house which will in the long run determine whether or not the people of our country will see a good or a bad government.

I say tonight that there is a grave responsibility upon the members of this house who sit on your right, Mr. Speaker, and upon that other group sitting on your far left because, of course, we will have to ensure that we do not go back to the situation obtaining in previous days. It will be our responsibility to treat fairly those propositions put forward by the opposition, to listen to them, and to consider them and, as the hon. member for Peel (Mr. Pallett) said last year, if the criticism that should be directed this way is not directed then I think it is our responsibility to see that it is.

An hon. Member: Don't worry we will be on the job.

Mr. Hamilton (York West): As a matter of fact I was wondering for a moment, whether my hon. friends were going to be on the job or not because at six o'clock the hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Argue) had just reached the point where he said they had been all wiped out and it is just as well that he got back on the track at eight o'clock and explained that they were going to remain on duty.

In any event I feel that the responsibility is in good hands and, if I might point this out, I believe there must be 35 or 40 of us who have been opposition members. We know what it is like to serve in a very small opposition group. I do not think we shall ever forget what it was like to so serve and I feel it should be pointed out that at the time of the election of June 10 there were very very few who sat on the government benches who had served in opposition prior to