

meet the needs of Canadians. On that basis the motion appears to be a motion of confidence in the government, at least in February. Secondly, the opposition has a measure of responsibility in the discharge of House business. If the opposition has not seen fit to assist the government in carrying out those measures which the opposition believes are adequate measures to meet the needs of Canadians, then the opposition has not fulfilled its duty. From this point of view the motion appears to be a motion of non-confidence in the opposition. Also, if we recall the oft repeated dictum of the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker), that the government proposes and the opposition disposes, the motion could be interpreted as a condemnation of the tactics the opposition has employed during the current session.

In a general way, as we know, the Throne Speech sets out the broad policy lines of the government's social and economic policies. When these were set out for this session by the government, the opposition, especially the official opposition, disparaged the policies at the time, heaped ridicule upon them and condemned them as being inadequate. Now they condemn the government for not ramming them through the House. The attitude of the opposition was negative, harsh and critical. They took refuge in a smokescreen of bilious platitudes.

The opposition has protested almost every sound piece of legislation brought forward by the government. Now they complain bitterly that some items in the program remain to be dealt with. That point was made very effectively by the leader of the Social Credit party. The official opposition especially condemns what it appears to support and supports what it appears to condemn. The opposition motion is directed to the serious question of the government's program in this Parliament and, in particular, this session.

I should like to answer the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) by relating some information about the legislative process and some documented facts about the tremendous amount of work this Parliament has accomplished, to show that the opposition's excessive abuse of parliamentary time in recent months has delayed the passage of some items of legislation which are part of the Throne Speech.

There is no doubt that time is a limited resource in the legislative process. From the perspective of the government House leader the legislative process is a complex process of anticipating and reconciling conflicting demands in a limited amount of time. This government will not be judged by the last three months alone; it will be judged by its program to date through four sessions of Parliament, ending possibly this session. Compared with the decade of the 1960s, the present Parliament to which we belong in its first two sessions sat longer and passed more bills of a lengthy, complex and technical nature than had been passed in the previous decade. Between the sessions of 1960 and 1968, Parliament sat an average of 142 days per session. During the first two sessions of this Parliament we sat, on the average, 176 days.

In the previous period to which I referred, Parliament enacted, on average, 46 public bills per session. During the first two sessions of this Parliament we enacted 65 bills per session. The number of pages of enacted legislation

#### *Procedure of Legislative Program*

has risen from an average of 461 in the period between 1960 and 1968 to 659 in the first two sessions of this Parliament. In other words, this Parliament had to deal with approximately 1½ times as many pages of enacted legislation per sitting day as it did on an average during the sessions from 1960 to 1968.

• (1640)

When we turn to the legislative performance of the third session of this Parliament, last session, it is possible to see an even greater acceleration in business. If we include all the sessions between 1960 and 1970, we get an average of 148 days; but in the third session we sat 243 days. In that session Parliament enacted 65 public bills, whereas the average number of public bills in the last decade was 49. Indicative of the technical and more complex nature of modern legislation, the third session passed, on the average, 1,037 pages of legislation compared with an average of 497 in the sessions between 1960 and 1970.

**Mr. Lewis:** Am I wrong, or were you minister from 1963 onward?

**Mr. MacEachen:** The hon. member is quite right. I am talking about the productivity of the current Parliament, to which this motion directs itself, in comparison with previous Parliaments. In terms of all the tests that we can apply, in terms of the pages of enacted legislation, of the labour of members sitting in the House and the output of bills, the record of this Parliament has been a good one.

Up to the present session the government has, therefore, been able to complete one of the most comprehensive programs ever put before Parliament. The government has proposed and has completed legislation in every conceivable area—economic growth, social justice and the quality of life. It has acted in the field of social justice by revising and raising old age security pensions and veterans pensions. It has reformed the Canada Labour (Standards) Code to raise the federal minimum wage. It has revised the Unemployment Insurance Act and it has brought before Parliament substantial revisions to the criminal law and generally to the legal system.

The government has responded to new demands, such as the increased concern with environmental matters, in several legislative steps including the creation of the Department of the Environment itself, the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act, the Canada Water Act, and so on.

In addition, during this Parliament the government has been much concerned with the maintenance and strengthening of an effective democratic process. It has put forward revisions to the Canada Elections Act. It put forward the Statutory Instruments Act, and on two occasions it undertook the comprehensive reorganization of government structure. In order to strengthen national unity—the leader of the Social Credit party referred to this matter—it put forward and brought into effect the Official Languages Act. In matters of economic growth the government has produced much important legislation, almost too numerous to outline at the moment, including the Canada Corporations Act revision, the investment companies act, the employment support act, the Regional Devel-