

Business of the House

commentaries will also be within the limits of the statement and reasonably short.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, the applause which has just occurred, with which I am in entire agreement, indicates that those people opposite feel exacerbated by the suggestion I made which would be beneficial to Canada as a whole, and which was demanded yesterday by the Manufacturers Association as necessary to preserve and extend the economy. I made that suggestion in the spirit of helpfulness which at all times I endeavour to exhibit. I thought the very suggestion on my part, when taken in conjunction with the serious views expressed by the Manufacturers Association as to this need, would be met with a different response from the Liberal Party than contemptuous jeering.

As far as the other matters are concerned, Sir, to which the Prime Minister referred, generally speaking they are, with one exception, mainly non-controversial. It was in that non-controversial state of mind that I made the suggestion that action is needed now in respect of these matters that affect the economy in the face of an extensive increase in the number of bankruptcies, never equalled since 1932; and let that fact be made clear.

I hope that between now and the date of the Prime Minister's departure to attend the Prime Ministers' Conference, he will give the House a general idea of his views regarding those matters which will come before the conference, to which reference has been made in the press. All of us will want to join in wishing him the very best as he represents our country at that great conference, and all of us hope that when he returns many of the things that will be placed before us will have been passed. I found that during the period I was Prime Minister it was said that usually when I was absent at a Prime Ministers' Conference greater progress was made in respect of legislation.

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Burnaby-Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure whether the last remark of the Leader of the official Opposition was a hint that the Prime Minister might consider taking that right hon. gentleman with him.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Speaker, I am willing to make that sacrifice in the interests of Parliament.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, the suggestion made by the hon. gentleman would

[Mr. Speaker.]

be completely cancelled out if both of us were to go. If I were here progress would be made.

Mr. Douglas: Mr. Speaker, I can assure both right hon. gentlemen that Parliament would do its best to get on without them, and we would guarantee to accomplish a good deal of work during their absence.

I think the items the Prime Minister has announced as being high on the priority list are in the main non-controversial, and I see no reason why we should not be able to deal with them fairly expeditiously. There will be some discussion and disagreement on minor points, but I think these are items with which we will be able to dispose of without too much trouble.

• (2:50 p.m.)

There are one or two items I would hope the Prime Minister would give consideration to advancing in the order of priority. They are items which it seems to me cannot be too long delayed. One is the Canada Assistance Plan, which is of very considerable interest and ought to have high priority. Then there are two pieces of labour legislation. One involves amendments to the Fair Wages and Hours of Labour Act. If they are not dealt with it will mean that those who come under the legislation at the present time will have one standard from July 1 onward and those who are employed by Government agencies or work for contractors hired by the Federal Government and who are not covered at the present time will continue to be overlooked after July 1. I believe there would not necessarily be extended debate, and in my opinion it is fairly important that this legislation be advanced.

I had also hoped that some time before the summer recess the Government would at least make a public declaration and if possible introduce a resolution making clear its intention to implement the recommendations of the Hall Commission on national health insurance. We are all aware of the fact that a number of provinces are proceeding with provincial plans. If enough of these plans are established on a provincial basis with no uniformity among them and no provision for their being meshed into a Federal plan, this could constitute a very serious obstacle to establishing national health insurance in Canada. I hope that some time before the recess the Government will make at least a declaration stating that it accepts the principle of national health insurance and intends to introduce legislation at this session of