

The Address—Mr. Patterson

statement. In fact, many have made similar statements in the past. I suggest that if the democratic processes are lost to us it will not be because some military force has moved in and deprived us of them but because of our own failure to use them wisely and effectively in the discharge of the nation's business.

Reference was made in the speech from the throne to the rules changes that have been implemented and which will be considered still further. I believe we have made good progress in streamlining our rules and procedures in the house, but I suggest we have only made a beginning. I say this because our last session lasted 15 months. We will either have to shorten debate or lengthen the year. I sometimes think it might be easier to lengthen the year than shorten debate. Nevertheless, I believe that this matter must be pursued actively and resolutely in order that our rules will provide for the effective dispatch of the public business in a reasonable length of time.

I believe the time has come when we must give some thought to the Canada Elections Act and parliament as a whole. I suggested some time ago that perhaps we should consider the system in use in the United States where there is a stated period of four years for the term of office of a government. I believe this would have two very beneficial effects. First, it would curtail a lot of the politicking that takes place under our system. It may be said that this is the place for politics. Perhaps it is a place for some politics but it is certainly not a place for continuous politicking. If there were set times for the sitting of parliament and perhaps the provision of safeguards and opportunities in respect of want of confidence motions at certain stated times, I believe this would contribute substantially to the effective discharge of the nation's business. Furthermore, it would cut down on the number of election campaigns in this country.

I know that some of our friends in the official opposition say that the reason for so many long sessions is that there are too many parties and we ought to get back to the two-party system.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Patterson: I notice that our friends in the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia, for example, do not look at it this way, because as soon as a provincial election is called they are right in there pitching, trying to upset the two-party system. What

they really mean by two parties is Liberals and Conservatives.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Patterson: Surely not. I suggest the reason we are so far behind in the nation's business is not that we have too many parties but too many election campaigns. Therefore I believe that the proposal that there be a four-year period of office for a government is worthy of consideration. I believe also that there must be stated times for sittings and recesses of parliament. If we cannot organize our business any better than we have been doing in the past several years, how in the world can the people expect us to discharge their business effectively?

I know it has been and will be said that we should sit all summer in order to get through the business before the house. It is said that we should make martyrs of ourselves in this respect. But the people are a little wiser than that and they do not think we are martyrs; rather, they think we are stupid because we cannot discharge our responsibilities in a reasonable length of time and get back to our ridings to discharge our obligations there.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Patterson: Time allocation for debates is another matter I bring to the attention of the house. I know this has been suggested before. It is said that there must be freedom of speech and we have heard cries of "guillotined" and so on. But I do not think the people take such cries seriously any more. In fact, I think the guillotine, if that is what it is to be called, should have been used a good deal more than it has been. I say that necessity requires and common sense demands the orderly dispatch of the nation's business.

There should also be a system of priorities so that we do not become bogged down in relatively unimportant matters while major issues facing the country remain unattended to. I believe that if we set our political house in order we must also recognize our responsibilities farther afield. Canada is in a wonderful position and has a wonderful opportunity, after it sets its political and material house in order, to make a contribution to the world and assist those nations which require assistance. I have before me statements pointing out the needs of people in various countries of the world who are hungry and starving to death, living in alleys and so on. In this respect I am reminded of the words of the Scriptures where it is said, "Give ye them to