

The Address—Mr. Pearson

would think it worth considering. Having talked about this, I went on to say:

With this kind of great international development project, with a cease-fire followed by political negotiations, with the countries in the area given an international guarantee of neutrality and assurance of aid for peaceful development, then the danger, destruction and distress of the present hour might be replaced by peace, hope and progress.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, that was an appropriate message to take to the United States at this time, and an appropriate proposal to discuss with the President of that country.

In the speech from the throne, after the reference to external affairs, there is a paragraph to which my right hon. friend referred at some length, dealing with the reform of the procedures of the house. In recent years we have made some progress in that direction. I think we could and should make more. I would like to pay my tribute, if I may, sir, to you as the chairman of the committee on procedure for the work of the members of that committee, and of the chairmen and members of the subcommittees. I think they have done all it was possible to do on the basis on which committees operate, on the basis of unanimity and referring proposals back to the House of Commons. I think it is now the duty of the government to ask parliament to move further ahead in this field and we will soon, as a government, for putting forward proposals to the House of Commons for that purpose.

In my view the reform of the procedures of the house is of very great importance to the functioning of parliamentary institutions in the interests of the people, and I acknowledge, and I agree with what the right hon. gentleman said about the vital importance of parliamentary institutions in our history and in our development.

It is the very essence of democracy that there should be debate, parliamentary debate, parliamentary discussion leading to consensus and leading to decision. The focus of this kind of discussion in a democracy must be in the House of Commons. But the discussion goes on continually in the country, in the home, in the workshop, in the corner store and in the luncheon club. Then it should come to a head here and it should lead to a decision here. I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that our procedures are no longer adapted as they should be to the expedition and the effectiveness of this process of discussion and decision. I think there are too many subjects which come before us now—subjects of vital importance and of great complexity and upon

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which decisions have to be made—to allow the luxury of the kind of unlimited discussion which was possible and desirable 50 years ago.

● (5:20 p.m.)

I do not believe our rules today are designed to take care of the existing situation. Our procedures are, I believe, developed from those followed in Westminster to meet the needs of democracy a century ago when issues were fewer and simpler, when those involved in them were fewer and when the element of time was of less importance. It is interesting to note—and I think I am accurate in saying this—that there have been more changes made in recent years in the procedure and rules of the mother of parliaments than have been possible to this particular daughter of the mother which often quotes the mother of parliaments as the reason we should not make changes here. I think it is wrong to cling to old and outworn methods, and that our real respect for parliament will be shown by our willingness to adapt our rules and procedure to today's requirements.

The necessity of managing our business more efficiently means of necessity, in my view, planning time for specific legislation.

Surely, we can make progress in this field as a parliamentary matter and, in the words of the speech from the throne, do something to combine effective debate and criticism with the effective dispatch of business.

Now I wish to deal with some of the economic matters referred to in the speech from the throne. They were referred to by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker). The paragraph on this subject reads:

Our country is achieving a high rate of economic growth. Trade is expanding. With growing industrialization, Canadians are enjoying rapidly increasing employment opportunities; incomes and living standards are rising; the number of people out of work has been reduced to lower levels than for many years.

I believe those statements are accurate and they should surely give satisfaction to every single member of this house wherever he may sit. I do not stand here to say this is due to the policy of the government, as the right hon. gentleman said it was due to the policy of the previous government. But I do say that the policies of this government have contributed to this satisfactory situation—satisfactory as far as it goes.

Mr. Diefenbaker: The United States has the same trend.