

Business of the House

combines act. I hope that even in the light of the experience that has already taken place the defence expenditures committee will hear witnesses on that subject.

So far as the estimates are concerned we have finished one department, agriculture, except for the supplementaries. That is the only department of government the estimates of which have been concluded at the present time. I mention this so that no one will be in any doubt as to the amount of time that will be required this session to give the business of government the consideration to which it is entitled, and to carry on that business in a careful, methodical and efficient way.

In those circumstances we can look forward, I believe, to a very active and I hope constructive summer.

Mr. Hazen Argue (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister outlined a very elaborate program that must be dealt with before the conclusion of this session. It has always seemed to me that it would help expedite the procedure during any session if we could have this kind of tabulation at the beginning so we would know at an early date the things that we would necessarily be dealing with during the session. As to a number of items, we have been uncertain whether the government was going to proceed with them or whether they would be dropped.

The Prime Minister has said that he is quite agreeable to having the debate on capital punishment come forward for a further day of debate. We in the C.C.F. would like to see this bill come to a vote, and we are quite prepared to give consideration at any time to a motion to provide for an additional day's debate on the bill to abolish capital punishment in the hope that a vote could be reached, and that the result of the vote would be to have the bill passed at this session.

I think the duty of the members of the House of Commons is to deal efficiently and carefully with the business as presented to the house. It is obvious from the list that has been given this morning and from the statement of the Leader of the Opposition that if there is no adjournment of this session, to be resumed at a later date, we shall be here for the summer. Now, a summer in Ottawa dealing with parliamentary duties puts many members of the House of Commons at a very great disadvantage. Many members have their families a long way from Ottawa; children are out of school during July and August, and this is the time when hon. members like to be with their families. Therefore it is a great sacrifice that members must make if the session continues.

Those of us who have had the experience of sitting in Ottawa during the summer months know that summer conditions in Ottawa, with the house meeting morning, afternoon and evening, to say the least are not conducive to the health of members of parliament. We feel that there is growing evidence to support the suggestion of the C.C.F. party that parliament would be enabled to deal more adequately with our legislation if we had a summer adjournment and came back later this year to conclude the remainder of the business of this session. However, with the Leader of the Opposition, we shall deal with each piece of legislation as it is presented to the house in a way that we think is in keeping with our duties.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I thank both hon. gentlemen for their ideas and the expression of their views. When the hon. member for Assiniboia says he could wish that such an elaborate program had been revealed earlier, I simply point out to him the fact that each and every portion of that program is set forth in the speech from the throne with the exception of the freight rates legislation, which could not have been anticipated in January last.

Mr. Pearson: The speech from the throne is not the order paper.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I agree with both hon. gentlemen that the proper responsibility of the House of Commons is to examine each piece of legislation carefully and exhaustively. All I can say in that regard is that I like parliament to be sitting, because it is very helpful to get the views of hon. members and to understand the thinking of Canadians as a whole. I think that is one of the reasons I suggested the setting up of a committee on rules, to the end that hon. members would be able, through that committee, to bring forward recommendations and suggestions which, without in any way limiting the first responsibility of the House of Commons for a careful examination, will assure efficient and effective discussion taking place without repetitious utterances which are not always synonymous with a careful examination.

Mr. Hellyer: Not even new rules would help a government like this one.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I know I had difficulty in controlling myself when the hon. member for Assiniboia was speaking, but I listened to his observations with attention because we have not heard from him lately. Naturally I listened with the fullest attention.