

Proposal for Time Allocation

which will reduce the half a million unemployed to the irreducible minimum in this country.

All these complex changes in our society require changes in our law and in our legislative processes to keep pace with them. If the laws are not adjusted in accordance with the requirements of our new life they can impede the development of Canada and reduce our capacity to provide the standards and levels which we would otherwise be capable of maintaining. That means, Mr. Speaker, that more legislation is required on more subjects in this country than ever before in our history. I hope to be able to indicate the evidence of this shortly. If our parliamentary institutions are unable to cope effectively with these legislative requirements, people will lose faith in parliament and its processes and they will lose faith in democracy also.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Pearson: Apart from the rapidly changing material circumstances of our society we are experiencing, as other countries are, a rapid change in values and popular attitudes. This has been reflected in this session of parliament in discussion of the laws relating to divorce, capital punishment, penal reform and other social problems. Surely, Mr. Speaker, it is of fundamental importance that the legal fabric of our society lag not too far behind these changes in values and attitudes.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Pearson: Surely it is important and essential that parliamentary procedure adapt itself to these new requirements.

If our laws are to be changed, they have to be changed by parliament. That is one of the main reasons for parliament's existence. Let us have discussion, of course, but discussion leading to decision after a reasonable time has been given for that discussion. Discussion, yes—but discussion leading to legislation, to approval or rejection of the proposals put before parliament. If parliament is not capable of dealing quickly and effectively with the needs of the country, it fails in its essential purpose. This does not mean, Mr. Speaker, and I would not like it to be interpreted as meaning, that this parliament has not accomplished a great deal.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Ha.

Mr. Pearson: This parliament has passed and is passing more legislation than has ever been passed before in our history.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Ha.

Mr. Pearson: That is true.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Pearson: In a similar period of time.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I thought we were obstructing.

Mr. Pearson: But that is not the proper standard of measurement we must apply to our parliamentary procedures. The standard is not measured against the record of the past but against the needs of the present and the future. The standard is not what has been done in previous sessions or, indeed, earlier in this session. The standard must be the needs of Canada and the Canadian people in the weeks, months and years ahead. I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that it is in this context that we must view the present situation in which parliament finds itself, and it is in this context, I suggest, that we must consider the decision of the government that there should be an opportunity for the House of Commons to allocate time as provided by our rules and to draw to a close this debate on defence unification and defence matters—by agreement, if possible. That agreement has not been possible. It was not possible because the official opposition made no proposal of any kind, as I understand it, for such allocation.

An hon. Member: That is not so.

Mr. Pearson: They made no proposal about any time that might be sufficient to dispose of this bill. Their view was that this bill is wrong—

An hon. Member: What about Tuesday?

Mr. Pearson:—that the government of the day does not accept their position that this bill is wrong, that it should not be proceeded with, and that they would continue to use the rules to discuss the bill in the hope of breaking our will so that we would abandon this bill at this time and go on with something else. Their position was, in other words, that we surrender to the opposition.

Mr. Churchill: Postpone the bill.

Mr. Pearson: Postpone the bill?

Mr. Churchill: That is the advice of the senior officers.