

making this period more effective and more efficient. I would have one suggestion to make to you, and it is this. When there are matters of urgent importance which may arise in a particular sitting, the questions which cannot be asked on one day might take precedent over those which might be asked on following days. There could be periods when the more legitimate questions might be dealt with.

I assure Your Honour of our co-operation in this matter. If it means limiting the number of questions we ask we shall be happy to go along with that proposal. If it means a self disciplining through co-operative arrangements among ourselves on a gentlemanly basis, we would be pleased to co-operate. We regard most highly the importance of your position in this house, Mr. Speaker, and at all times you can be assured of our support in the Social Credit party.

[Translation]

Mr. Real Caouette (Villeneuve): Mr. Speaker, we greatly appreciate the six-point suggestions you are making to the house today.

In my view, this period for oral questions could have been cut down substantially if ministers had taken less time on many occasions to answer questions. Then, each member of the house would have received a swift reply to his query.

Members of the Ralliement Creditistes are certainly happy to offer you their full co-operation.

However, we were both scared and reassured by item 3 of your suggestions, in which you said:

[Text]

I would take it upon myself to select questioners in rough ratio to the number of hon. members comprising any one body in the house.

[Translation]

We have confidence in your fair-minded judgment, Mr. Speaker, and I think we can rest assured that although we are sitting far from you in the house, you will recognize us when we have reasonable questions to address to the various ministers of the crown.

[Text]

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, questions, of course, are of particular concern, and rightly so, to the opposition. I think all members on this side have heard with satisfaction the statements that have been made by the Leader of the Opposition and the leaders of the other opposition parties in respect of the proposal you have put to us. We would like to join them, Mr. Speaker, in expressing appreciation to you for the consideration you have given this matter.

Statement on Paving of Alaska Highway

At first reading it looks as if the proposals you have made are constructive and will facilitate and make more effective the question period. The Leader of the Opposition has suggested that the statistics might be extended to cover last year and the year before. I think that is quite a reasonable suggestion for those who are interested in statistics.

Mr. Diefenbaker: The Minister of Agriculture does not belong to that group.

Mr. Pearson: I might say it is desirable, as your memorandum suggests, to make the questions short and the answers short. I am sure it is the experience of the house that if questions are asked in the correct way, without unnecessary or controversial verbiage, then the answer is more likely to be short. I mention this just to show that there is a responsibility on both sides of the house in respect of making the question period effective. I am sure all members on both sides of the house will do what they can to make it effective. I think your proposals, sir, are helpful, and to that end they will certainly receive the support of the house.

NORTHERN AFFAIRS

PAVING OF ALASKA HIGHWAY—STATEMENT BY EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER

Hon. Paul Martin (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I should like to deal with a question which the hon. member for Yukon raised the other day. On October 29 the hon. member for Yukon suggested that I might not have given full information to the house in the answer I gave to him on October 21 in reply to his question No. 1,235.

In the reply quoted by the hon. member I indicated that of the five subjects about which he inquired, only the question of the Haines cut-off highway had recently been discussed with the United States authorities. On October 29 the hon. member implied that in indicating that none of the other four subjects had been discussed with the United States, my information was not accurate. My answer was in fact an accurate statement, and I tell the hon. gentleman it was intended to be helpful to him.

The hon. member will recall that in his question he referred to "consultations". I used the words "negotiations" and "discussions" instead of the word "consultations", because the former terms seemed to me more precise. I also qualified my reply by using the word "recent", as I assumed that the hon. member was interested in fairly current developments and not in history.