

*Private Members' Hour*

● (1420)

I say, with all the emphasis I can bring to bear on this point, that the reason we are opposing this motion is that we want a new session with a new throne speech which will deal with the following pressing problems. There are 800,000 Canadians looking for work. There are hundreds of thousands of Canadians who need housing in virtually every city, town and small village in the country. There is the shambles that is passing for a nuclear policy. Quite hypocritically, the government has day after day this week pretended to the people of Canada that it is going to introduce a nuclear policy. The purpose of this policy is to control and maintain nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, but in my view the government has virtually made up its mind to embark upon a deal with Pakistan which will lose all control for Canada over nuclear technology and set the stage for the development of a new nuclear weapon elsewhere in the world. There is no nuclear policy at all. The transportation minister has outlined in general form his current views, which in terms of the reaction of many people in western Canada is a potential dismemberment of the national railway system that we now have in this country.

Last, but not least, there have been the philosophical meanderings of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) on television during the past month when, in typical sophisticated fashion, he has raised more questions than he dares provide answers to, and has been interpreted as being everything from a fascist on the right to some kind of Stalinist socialist to the left.

The people of Canada have every right to expect this government now to come up with a new throne speech outlining in detail what it wants to do about unemployment, about housing, about nuclear policy and about transportation policy, and putting in more precise terms the framework the Prime Minister thinks he is going to use in developing his new society. We want action on these matters now, and that is why we oppose this motion.

**Mr. R. Gordon L. Fairweather (Fundy-Royal):** Mr. Speaker, this parliament has never—

**An hon. Member:** Now you are going to get it.

**Mr. Fairweather:** Nobody is going to get anything. This parliament has never really met the issue of reform of its procedures. With the greatest amount of respect to the Pearson years, to which I alluded this morning because I was in a mood of *déjà vu* and because of certain privileges that have returned to the scene, the requirements of these years really have not been met and, as the British had to do in the 1890s, we must reform the system.

It seems to me that the length of a session is not particularly the problem, though it does obscure the public's perspective of what we are about here. The problem, surely, is that the rules and practices, outmoded as they are, are designed for a 12-month year when you start it up in January and there is a great effort to get home at Easter. I am of an age that I still remember the predecessor in my constituency chugging in on the railway train sometime around May when he had completed the annual task, and then when there was an emergency the train would go out again and there would be a couple of months

work here in the fall. The public is slightly confused, despite the interesting statistics of the hon. member for Madawaska-Victoria (Mr. Corbin) because it lives in a calendar year and we seem to have slopped over slightly: we are now into the third calendar year.

It seems to me there are several reasons for really coming to grips with reform. One of them is civility to the staff of this institution, and I like to think that would be very high on our priorities. The second is civility to constituents who to me seem not to have the slightest idea, now, when their member of parliament can be expected in the constituency for any length of time.

In a philosophical political mood, I think the generosity of former of prime minister Pearson's weekly passes cannot be gainsaid; but that generosity brings with it a problem. The problem is that a good many members of parliament are constantly in the air, going somewhere or coming back from somewhere. This has had serious repercussions on their health, if I may say so, to say nothing of their consideration of legislation, and so on. Because of the generosity of our travel arrangements, people expect us to be in our constituencies to open up every gas pump and every hamburger stand. Not to be snooty about it, this means that unless we are careful—

**An hon. Member:** What have they got in those hamburgers?

**Mr. Fairweather:** I am probably the product of too many hamburgers. I am not being snooty or stand-offish, but I think we have to be selective in the acceptance of invitations.

I used to feel some compassion for one of the former ministers. He is not here now, and perhaps his travel arrangements are the reason for his absence. I used to watch him leaving on Fridays for one of the coasts of this country and did not know how the man carried on his portfolio from 35,000 feet over the Rockies, week in and week out, year in and year out. I do not think it was a good arrangement for his private life, his portfolio or his participation in parliament.

There are a couple of parliaments which have dealt with this matter, but perhaps not in as dramatic a fashion as I would like. One is Australia, where every third week—and I can be corrected on this—there is a certain length of time off. The system needs time to regurgitate—

**An hon. Member:** Do something about it, Mitch.

**Mr. Fairweather:**—which means that all those pieces of paper that flow inexorably—like Tennyson's brook, this "goes on forever"—can be indexed, and so on, and brought up to date. In this way, members of parliament could make arrangements in their constituencies. Constituents would get to know that, say, every third or fourth week would in fact be constituency week. They could lay up a whole series of gas pump and hamburger stand openings and the other things we are expected to do in order to fulfil our heavy responsibilities to the state.

Thank goodness we are still operating on the Christian calendar. With great respect to the House leader, if we did not have the intervention of Christmas, Easter, and perhaps Canada, Dominion, national, or whatever day it is