

Business of the House

which may be acceptable to the house so as to facilitate the transaction of this business. I express the hope that the discussions among the representatives of all parties in his chamber which commenced this morning at the invitation of the government will be fruitful in devising plans to give effect to the co-operation so generally, I think, desired both in this house and outside.

Hon. L. B. Pearson (Leader of the Opposition): I am sure all members of the house, and certainly we on this side, have listened with great interest to the Prime Minister's proposals some of which, if I understand him correctly, would represent a drastic alteration of the rules of the house. We shall, of course, take these proposals into immediate consideration from the opposition point of view, having regard to our responsibilities as an opposition both to the country and to parliament, and with a desire to co-operate with the government within the rules which protect the rights and the freedom of members of the House of Commons and the rights and freedom of the people.

Mr. R. N. Thompson (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, we in this corner of the house are gratified that there is a prospect of getting down to the really serious business which is our responsibility in this house. However, in considering the remarks which the Prime Minister has just made I would remind him that this is not only a question of co-operation by all parties in the house; it is also a question of follow up and carry through as far as the government is concerned on what is done.

I trust that as we discuss this point amongst ourselves, as we have already heard about from our house leaders, we will have the assurance that we really are going to make progress in this outline of work which has been given to us. I assure the Prime Minister that for our part we are only too anxious to get down to the real business which is before us, and in so far as it relates to our own responsibilities I can assure him that we will co-operate in every reasonable manner. Certainly there is a great deal of business which needs to be done. We realize that before we can get down to the business of a new budget we have to clear the supply motions regarding the last budget. We must also clear the needed interim supply motion. As this relates to work that is our essential business, I hope we can really settle down to the prospects of work in the new year. We will give our whole-hearted co-operation to it.

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Burnaby-Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, the proposals which the Prime Minister has just made were, I understand, conveyed to the whips of the various groups [Mr. Diefenbaker.]

at a meeting held this forenoon. No opportunity has been given to transmit those views, certainly to myself and I suspect also to the leaders of the other groups, and certainly no opportunity has been given to discuss them with the members of this house. I think that opportunity will have to be given for consideration before any decision can be made.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to point out, for this group that the proposals ask for a tremendous surrender by the members of this house of their rights and responsibilities. We still have five supply motions which have a place in our parliamentary system. Except for two or three departments which have been opened, we still have to bring in all the departments. The purpose of going through estimates is not only to pass sums of money but to provide members with an opportunity to question ministers regarding policies and programs, and to ascertain something about the working of each department. What we are being asked to do is to surrender all of this and to pass in a lump sum great quantities of money without any opportunity for a thorough investigation of the work of the departments. I point, for instance, to defence as a good example. It is now being suggested that we have a two day debate on defence and external affairs. Is this a substitute for a thorough opportunity in committee of supply to question the ministers concerned and get information regarding their departments? It is the kind of information we must have.

I wish to say that it seems to me to be almost completely unheard of that any members of parliament should be requested to undertake this vast surrender of their responsibilities without a much greater opportunity for discussion as between the groups than has been provided so far. We shall be glad to consider this suggestion and to discuss it with the leader of the house and on the floor of the house when this matter is before parliament itself.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I shall not reply to what the hon. gentleman has said, Mr. Speaker, except to say that there is no surrender. I am asking for the consent of the house.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**STATEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER ON
NASSAU MEETINGS**

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I think I should now make a statement with regard to the meetings with President Kennedy and Prime Minister Macmillan. At Nassau before Christmas I had discussions with the President of the United States and Prime Minister Macmillan on the grave policy questions facing the western alliance in the political and defence