

of the united nations. The constitution provides that that organization is set up for securing improvement in the efficiency of the production and distribution of all foods and agricultural products, and its functions are to deal with the conservation of natural resources and the adoption of improved methods of agricultural production. "Agriculture" is defined in the constitution to include fisheries. That is an organization that has been set up comprising some fifty-odd nations and the purpose of the constitution includes the conservation of food products and natural resources, including the fisheries. The proclamation made by the President of the United States and the President of Mexico is aimed at the conservation of the resources of the oceans, and would I think be one of the very interesting subjects to be dealt with on an international level. As the hon. member knows, Canadian representatives are taking an active part in the deliberations and representations of this food and agriculture organization, and he may be sure that the matter will not be lost sight of.

Mr. GRAYDON: I find myself at a disadvantage this morning in attempting at this stage of the session to discuss in any great detail matters relating to external affairs. The pressure of the session at this hour precludes that. I am sorry it is so—not that the committee will miss very much from any contribution that I might normally make, but that observation does apply to many other members who are interested and who have followed keenly external affairs in this and previous sessions.

I wonder if the committee will bear with me for a few minutes while I discuss one or two of the major points of interest to Canada from the point of view of external affairs.

I should like first of all to refer to the question of the standing committee. This standing committee on external affairs has had this session, for the first time, the consideration of estimates of a government department in full. In other words, the Department of External Affairs has been the guinea pig for a new experiment in the specialization of the efforts of members of this house. The setting up of the external affairs committee was undertaken in the first instance after considerable pressure and many suggestions by the opposition and members in other parts of the house as well. We had gone too long without a proper external affairs committee meeting regularly each session as a standing part of our procedure, and so when parliament met last September I welcomed the suggestion of the government to set up a committee which had been asked for on

so many previous occasions. I also welcomed the opportunity of having the estimates of the department referred to that committee. No other estimates in full of an entire department had been so referred to a committee before, and I wish to make this observation, which I hope will be constructive.

I do not think we can any longer carry on without being made ridiculous in the eyes of the public generally under the system of parliamentary procedure which we follow in this house, having regard to the volume of business and the amount of money that is being expended by the dominion government. We should be bringing about some change in the consideration of departmental estimates. I agree with what the hon. member for New Westminster has said. I believe his views are shared by every member of this house who wishes to do a decent job for Canada, as I am sure every member does.

I do not think we can hope to retain public confidence if we continue to have the estimates dealt with as they have been during the past week. I am not blaming anyone for that. I do blame the whole parliamentary procedure, and I would blame parliament itself if we continued that system. We cannot afford to do so. My suggestion therefore is this. The external affairs committee has gone over the estimates of external affairs in detail, with great care, and over a considerable period, and I think it is time for parliament to make its decision and see to it that we bring under the same policy other departments of government. Then there will be no difficulty about last-minute consideration of estimates being rushed through in this way. If they are rushed through at least a committee will have previously dealt with them. But that is vastly different from the present practice of having item after item passed through, as we have witnessed this week, without the slightest attention being given to anything in detail. Indeed, many items have passed respecting which there has been very little knowledge on the part of any member outside the government or the head of the department concerned.

In this house we are not mobilizing the brains and energy that we possess. There are members who are not given an opportunity to play their proper part in the general discussion and examination of expenditures, and after all, that is one of the major parts of our business as members of parliament. But if we adopt the principle of having estimates referred to committees—we may not be able to do that with regard to all the estimates at the next session, but at least we can continue the experiment that has been initiated—we can specialize in the