

requirements, and we will pay close attention to any suggestions made at this Conference. We do not, by the way, consider the information flow a one-way street. There also would be benefits to more extensive debriefings and discussions after foreign visits.

Providing additional opportunities for foreign policy debates in the House of Commons is an attractive idea. It is often suggested that the Government ought to put more time available for foreign policy debates. And of course each of us agrees in principle with that idea. The implementation is a much more difficult one. Another former House Leader is sitting in front of me, Mr. Sharp, and he knows as the present House Leader knows and his colleagues in the other parties the demands that are made on the House of Commons. When there are bills to be passed, still waiting in the wings, it is more difficult to put aside time for two or one day of debate on a general subject of interest in the foreign policy field. However we have had at least one government-sponsored debate earlier in this Parliament, and recently the Prime Minister's peace initiative was the subject of a thorough exchange during the Throne Speech debate. Now what can we do more to sponsor these particular foreign policy debates of a general character in the House of Commons? I think the prospects for future debates depend of course on the overall use of House time, both from the Government and Opposition perspectives. As a former Leader of the Government in the House I know that proposals for general foreign policy debates face stiff competition from other items of business. This said, I believe it would be worthwhile to explore whether among parties we could achieve a more coordinated approach to the use of House time that would improve the prospect for foreign policy debates in the future.

Now may I say a word about a practice that used to exist in the House of Commons which has fallen into disuse and that is the practice of Government Statements on motions. It used to be the case that when the Prime Minister or the Secretary of State for External Affairs returned to the country following an important visit abroad that frequently a statement was made on motions. Opposition parties were permitted under the rules to comment. And now if that procedure were used it would permit questions to be asked. Well that practice has virtually disappeared. I think it is unfortunate. I think we should try to have it revived. It can only be revived by some discussion among the parties as to how they will use that time. I've never been against political debates. I've never been against the cut and thrust that will occur in the House of Common. But I've expressed the view that the main reason why Ministers, certainly the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for External Affairs, have found it not very productive to