

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, January 21, 1963

The house met at 2.30 p.m.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER ON ITEMS TO BE DEALT WITH

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, with the consent of the house I should like to make a statement on the business of the house. I should like to commence, of course, by wishing all hon. members of the house the very best during the new year, within the limitations that hon. members opposite fully understand.

With the resumption of the sittings it is natural that hon. members would like to have a general idea of the business to come before the house. At the time of adjournment on December 20 there were 24 items of business on the order paper. Several more are being added today and will appear in *Votes and Proceedings*. These will include a resolution to permit the introduction of an extensive bill to amend the provisions of the Railway Act, based on recommendations made by the MacPherson royal commission. Also there will be a resolution arising out of certain recommendations of the O'Leary royal commission on publications. In due course there will be some further measures, including one to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act following the report of the Gill committee. It is evident, therefore, that the house faces a heavy volume of work during the remainder of the present session.

The house might also wish to have the view of the government—and I hope this is shared by hon. members in all parts of the house—in relation to the sequence of business. Parliament has already voted approximately ten twelfths of the estimates of the current 1962-63 fiscal year. I hope all hon. members will concur with the government's desire to have these estimates passed in their entirety as soon as possible and thus avoid any necessity for further votes of interim supply. It is no more the wish of the government than it is that of hon. members in the opposition that further fractional amounts be voted in the absence of approval of the estimates in the ordinary manner in committee of supply and by the enactment of an appropriation bill.

To date in the present session there has been one supply motion and the estimates of the following departments have already been moved into committee of supply: external affairs, agriculture, labour, transport, post office and national revenue. I propose and suggest that representatives of the three parties, who have already met, should continue to meet with the leader of the house to discuss a method of expediting consideration of the estimates for the fiscal year 1962-63.

Some time ago I gave an assurance that it was the desire of the government to introduce the budget for the 1963-64 fiscal year earlier than has been the custom in the past. The early disposal of the estimates for 1962-63 will enable the Minister of Finance to bring a budget before the house accordingly.

There have been a number of requests for a debate on external affairs. Indeed, the house has been desirous of an opportunity to consider a number of matters comprised within that department. It was also, it appears, the general desire than an early opportunity should be given for a debate on questions pertaining to national defence. The government concurs in these wishes and proposes to call the estimates of the Department of External Affairs for consideration in committee of supply on Thursday and Friday of this week. In this way the fullest opportunity for the discussion of these questions will be provided. In other words, during the course of the discussion following the opening on the subject of external affairs the whole question of defence could be considered even though the estimates in that regard would not be by motion before the house. We are prepared to make available every opportunity in this regard to the end that this most important matter, which in the last two or three weeks has received considerable attention outside the house, may receive the consideration of hon. members.

This is a very heavy program of government business awaiting the attention of the house, and it is obvious that the co-operation of all parties—I emphasize "all parties"—will be necessary if this volume of business is to be transacted within a reasonable period of time. Without going into any matter which might cause division or diversion in the house at the moment, may I say that the government is prepared to propose an extension of the hours of sitting or any other measures