

Business of the House

The point is that the government has business to do and we have business to do. I think we must take the necessary time to do a good job regardless of centennial year.

The hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam mentioned some other matters which are not set out here and which should be included. One matter which should be considered is the bankruptcy situation. If the Prime Minister thinks this is not too important, he should speak to the Minister of Justice, who stated before the Senate committee that this is one of the most important problems facing this country today because of the tax losses to the government and the losses to everybody else. There are a multitude of problems which might come up and which are not listed in the 20 different pieces of legislation mentioned.

I wish to be realistic in respect of this matter; therefore I say to the Prime Minister "Good luck". In the meantime, however, we will do our job. If it is possible for us to get away for the centennial celebrations, then well and good; but as responsible members of parliament I believe our first duty is to ensure that the administration of this country is not left on the loose after 100 years of work and dropped in a shambles, even if it is only for one year. We know what is involved in attempting to catch up again.

With the amount of work which is before us I cannot see the possibility of a long summer recess. If it is necessary to continue on into July in order to complete our work, then we should do so. On the other hand, if it is possible to complete our work in June then we will be able to get away in June.

• (3:10 p.m.)

When we adjourn will depend on how the legislation is brought in, the number of legislative items and the importance of that legislation. The more items brought in and the more important they are, the more discussion we are likely to have.

I hope the Prime Minister's wish comes true, but I would not bet too much that it will. The chances are pretty slim, and I am sure that if he should win such a bet at all it would be only by the skin of his teeth. I hope my fears turn out to be unfounded in this regard. In the meantime I assure the Prime Minister that we will give him all the co-operation he needs without, however, neglecting our responsibilities.

[Mr. Langlois (Mégantic).]

Mr. R. N. Thompson (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, after listening to the Prime Minister's remarks and the comments of those who have spoken since, I cannot help but think it is a good thing that we in 1967 do not have the responsibilities the Fathers of Confederation had 100 years ago in 1867, because I am sure we would never have got together.

I am in agreement with the Prime Minister that it is essential we have a recess of parliament during the summer months. I do not know what commitments the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam has after May 15, but I am aware of my own engagements between that date and the middle of September. Members of the cabinet and other members of parliament I am sure have commitments which will make it practically impossible for them to attend to the normal duties of parliament if it is in session during those months.

In this connection we as members of parliament have a definite responsibility to the people of Canada to share with them the celebrations of our centennial. It is the responsibility of members of this house to assist in a very specific way in making our centennial celebrations what they should and must be if our centennial is to carry the full impact it should and must to the nation.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Thompson: It is my hope that some arrangement can be worked out among the various house leaders and parties so we can complete the essential work of parliament by the middle of May. This will allow us to fulfil our responsibilities to our constituents and to the nation, at least until the middle of September.

I cannot understand why the Prime Minister continues to hold this situation as a club over members of the House of Commons as he has again today, when he said in the second paragraph of his statement that any recess will depend upon the co-operation he receives in dealing with the legislative proposals the government has in mind.

Certainly a great deal of responsibility in this regard rests on the government in its management of our affairs and the initiative it takes in getting certain legislative proposals under way. For instance, the special committee to study parliamentary rules and procedures will be faced with a major task. That committee should have been set up and become active long before now, because we realize that at the end of the current session