

The Address—Mr. Diefenbaker

second or third time. It is only a few months since the government brought in changes through the medium of a white paper. This was revised when it became evident, as we pointed out, that they discriminated against sponsored immigrants. Now there are to be further revisions.

Urban development is also resurrected. I can just see the members of the cabinet saying to each other, "What did we ever say that we did not carry out? Let us put down our broken promises in order." There are to be new housing programs. Canada is in the worst housing mess it has ever been in. Nothing would be more beneficial than the removal of the sales tax on building materials. But the government will not do that.

It has also produced a rephrased vision of the north. Members of the government now recognize Canada's northland which they once ridiculed. Now they want to do something about it.

They brought capital punishment and divorce together in the one line. One ends trouble and the other begins it.

Miss LaMarsh: Which is which?

Mr. Diefenbaker: But they left out the other corner of the Prime Minister's social trilogy, the abortion promise. They left that out.

Mr. Pearson: We are leaving that to the opposition.

Mr. Diefenbaker: The government's proposal respecting financial disclosure by corporations gives lip service to the principle of protecting the investor. They say they are going to revise safety standards. They forgot to put in the code of ethics. This, Mr. Speaker, is a cursory summary of what they say they are going to do.

It is said, Mr. Speaker, that parliament is not effective. It is just because of this kind of thing that it is not effective—a government that produces a speech from the throne full of generalities and replays its record of broken promises. One of the most effective portions of the speech by the hon. member who moved the address in reply came when he spoke of parliament. He said that he came in here believing that this institution measured up to the criticism of those who have never seen parliament.

Recently I talked to one of the outstanding Canadians of our time and he told me parliament was deficient and ineffective. I asked him, "How many times have you seen parliament in action?" He replied, "I have read

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about it." Parliament is always criticized. It is criticized in Britain today. It is criticized in Australia and in New Zealand but somehow or other the critics in all generations find that what they criticize is the effective embodiment and protection of freedom.

Parliament is not a sausage machine to grind out legislation. Parliament is a place in which the freedom of the individual is preserved. That is its first purpose.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Parliament is not a place that is to be efficient. That is the civil service idea, that all that is necessary is for a bill to be introduced, a crank to be turned by the government and out will come an act of parliament. That is not the concept that has made for the greatness of this place in the British tradition.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I know that those in the press gallery will not agree but I say to some of them who criticize parliament, as the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Hellyer) said a few months ago, those who have the responsibility of communicating what happens in parliament to the public are not reporting what takes place here in a way that enables Canadians to weigh the issues. What is happening is that less and less space is available for factual reporting.

They complain about attendance in the House of Commons. Mr. Speaker, there is too much absenteeism. There is no doubt about that. I am not one of those who have insisted on a roll call but there is a roll call in the Senate and also in the Congress of the United States. But I do say that we members of the House of Commons cannot justify our absences unless we are on some business connected with constituencies or the responsibilities of office or the responsibilities of those who lead parties.

• (3:50 p.m.)

Then there is the idea that one can understand parliament by going upstairs and staying out of the house. I have heard that mentioned all through the years. The hon. member for Burin-Burgeo has been in the house. He has listened; he has caught something of the spirit of the house. He could not have got this by being absent from the house. We will not reform parliament until we have an attendance here which is not like that of the past few years. I know some of my colleagues will not like this. This has never been