

moments and bad moments. I have experienced all of its moods. However, to me it is still the kind of institution that serves a country like Canada well.

I do not like it when members of the House stand up and try to say it is not relevant, that there is a malaise and that things are going to the dogs. That is not true. We have one of the best institutions we could have for the governing of a country. I admit that things are not bright, happy and glorious every day. There are days when nothing seems to get done, days when there seems to be a lot of talk and no action. If you get quite a few of such days, persons like the hon. member for Eglinton and John Drewery have a basis for saying that kind of thing, that it is irrelevant.

I want to say quite freely, as a member of the opposition, as one who does his share of talking here, that we have to consider continuously the place of debate on the floor of the House of Commons, the length of speeches, the times we spend on different subjects, and so on. I still contend that much more has to be dealt with in parliament today than was the case 109 years ago or even 34 or 35 years ago when I came here, and we have to modify our rules. But I do not think you solve anything by shortening speeches or arbitrarily, through government fiat, bringing in closure. You solve the problem by somehow coming together and making conscious decisions to debate on the floor of the House serious and important issues and not spending unlimited time on unimportant matters. The responsibility for that is just as much on our side as it is on the other side. Having said that, I want to say as strongly as I can that what is wrong with this parliament, why I think questions are being asked and all these comments are being made, is that the very thing the hon. member for Eglinton said we should be doing is not being made possible; it is not being put before us. The hon. member said we should be discussing important matters, not trivia. He called this motion today a matter that is trivial. I do not agree with him, because it involves the whole relationship between government and parliament.

However, I suggest to him that one of the outstanding questions facing the people of Canada today is unemployment. There are a million Canadians unemployed. Why does the government not bring something before us? There is nothing wrong with this parliament that would not be cured by the presenting to it of good legislation. That is where the trouble lies: we are not getting it.

What is being done about the gross inequalities that subsist among our people? Some of us have expressed the effort to minimize inequality by working very hard in the field of pensions, family allowances, and so on. I am proud of the part that my generation in this place has played in the last three or four decades in winning improvements in pensions, veterans pensions, family allowances and unemployment insurance so that we have a much better distribution of the wealth we produce than used to be the case. With all of that, however, the gap is still there. The poor may have more dollars, more goods and services than the poor had a generation or two ago, but the gap between them and those at the top is still very wide.

### *Dollar Items*

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark), the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) and I asked questions today of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) about the proposed salaries for top civil servants of up to \$70,800 a year. We got back a laugh. And the hon. member for Eglinton wonders why there are questions about parliament! The issue of economic inequality, salaries, wages, pensions and all the rest is just as important a question today as it was when we were adopting the Old Age Security Act, the Family Allowances Act and unemployment insurance, and improving veterans pensions. A great gap in incomes is just a joke to the millionaires in the cabinet. It is really a tragedy that the Prime Minister is so insensitive to the basic needs of the people of this country.

I add to unemployment as a serious problem, and the economic inequalities that we face, the terrible question of regional inequalities in this country. It is a scandal that in a country which we want to be united there are such vast differences between our regions—three wealthy provinces, a few middle ones, and those that are terribly poor. Life in some parts of the country is five or six times better economically than in other parts of the country. Give us a government that will bring these things in here, and this parliament, without changing a single rule, will come to life.

#### ● (1610)

Do not tell me parliament is irrelevant. Do not tell me it is dead. Do not tell me there is a malaise, that we are bored. Just bring the legislation before us that this country needs at present, and you will see that the parliamentary institutions which we inherited from Westminster and have built up here since 1867 are good.

I am not against some rule changes; I am not against some improvements. But I have been through too many committees trying to make those changes to think that that is the whole story. What is needed is a government that is relevant. Parliament will be relevant if the government is relevant to the issues that are before us. There is the question of national unity and all that is involved. What has been brought before us? Probably I have not named them all, but I have named the main concerns of Canadians today—unemployment, economic inequality, the suffering of our pensioners who do not have enough, regional inequalities, and the serious problems related to national unity.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier):** Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but the time allotted to him has expired. He may continue with unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** I am grateful to the House for letting me carry on, but I will not abuse that courtesy. I appreciate the attention that has been given, and I should like to wind up by saying that I think Brooke Claxton was right, back in 1943, when he called on hon. members not to weaken parliament by sneering at it and its workings. I call