

*Duration of Sittings*

the Governor General to act by saying that, because the government was defeated, it did not necessarily mean an election should be called but that the opposition should be asked to form the government and be given the opportunity to do so. I believe there should be such a reasonable arrangement—and it would have to be a pretty formal arrangement—whereby the government could be changed in a four-year period without an election necessarily being called.

I am sure that if any member of parliament were asked now about an election being called, he would agree that we should have one and get it over with, whatever the result might be, but that some decision must be taken before long, because obviously this is a lame government and will continue to be so until an election is called.

We need another safeguard. In another bill I suggested the safeguard of a vote by 75 per cent of the members of the House on a motion put forward by 15 or 20 members stating that the House has now reached a stage at which it is desirable and beneficial to the nation to have a general election. If 75 per cent of the members supported such a motion, an election would be called, notwithstanding a set period of time in which elections are called.

The hon. member for Cochrane made mention of a ceremonial session in parliament. I have not much objection to that, but I certainly hope it would not rain on the day we decided to sit outside. In my area July 1 has been a rainy day for some time now; it has been a great time to get wet. Maybe that in itself would have an equalizing effect on the people attending the ceremonies.

I think there is something else we should do about parliament. Parliament in effect has failed in two ways. First, it has failed drastically because of some modifications we have made in our rules. We have lost control over the government's expenditure of money. We are in no position now to amend that expenditure. Quite often when the day comes that we have to pass the estimates, we pass items representing billions and billions of dollars in one motion without having scrutinized them, simply because the time has elapsed.

Therefore, we should look for a new system which would allow us some way of supervising the expenditures of the government in depth. I suggest that that be done by breaking each session of parliament into a number of sections. In one section we could discuss the expenditures of a set number of departments. We should do that in the House with all members in attendance until that scrutiny is completed. Then we would leave that for a period of time and continue with the other departments. We would be scrutinizing also the budgets for various programs within the departments to see whether or not they are still useful and whether or not they are overloaded with bureaucrats. I am sure there are departments, or branches within departments, or programs under departments, in which a number of bureaucrats are employed.

An illustration of that was given to me recently by my doctor who was treating a scientist in the civil service for a nervous breakdown. He was one of seven people who had been doing specific research in the department for a number of

years. When these seven Ph.D.s first started working in that branch of the department there were three secretaries assisting them. Now, in the latest cutback which the government started implementing, four of the scientists had been relieved of their duties but the 300 support staff working with the original seven scientists still remain. Not one of them received notice that they were being laid off. I am only relating this as an example of what MPs scrutinizing the expenditures of a department would come across.

No one who has looked in depth at our committee system would fail to agree that it was a total failure. This is a great way of getting an education from senior civil servants who can tell you anything they want in their own specific fields and you pretty well have to take their word because your expertise does not extend into those fields.

● (1732)

The second period that should be set aside would be for investigation. We should investigate new ideas and new things that perhaps parliament should consider. One of the things we should be looking at is the use of social security numbers. Do we want to have SINS and do we want those numbers to be used for the purposes of unemployment insurance, or do we want them to be used as numbers fed into a computer for financial purposes? Those are the things we should be looking at in depth. Members of parliament represent all the people in this country and should come here as representatives to investigate these things. When a conclusion is arrived at, it will probably bear some relation to the needs of the people and to what the people feel they can support.

The third period of that session would be designated for legislation. When we discuss legislation it should be here in the House in terms of how it affects the various ridings. Each of these periods would fit into the categories mentioned by the hon. member for Cochrane, and would fit his suggestion that there should be more independence in this House and less partisanship.

When we come here we come as representatives of an area. In northern Ontario we have less partisanship than exists in many other areas. We can quite easily get together on many matters that affect northern Ontario because our problems are the same throughout the area and the members are relatively representative of the people there. I am not sure that is true of other areas, but it is true of ours. If there were less partisanship and more attention paid to the ridings and the areas we represent, we would have much better legislation in this country.

The last period would be that period when members of parliament go back home to visit their constituents. It is very easy to get out of touch with the man in the street when you stay in these buildings. It is nice to talk about reducing unemployment insurance benefits by 10 per cent, but when you talk to Bill Smith who has a 10 per cent reduction to his unemployment insurance, he will damned well tell you how it affects him. It means he is 10 per cent short on his hydro bill, 10 per cent short on his rent, and 10 per cent short on his car