

where our tradition comes from, it carries some weight as a Government statement by the sovereign.

If the Government were to take that concept and bring in a new Speech from the Throne addressing the problems of today, it would be welcomed by all Canadians.

On Tuesday, April 12, *The Citizen* of Ottawa made the point that Parliament has been sitting since April 14, 1980 without the benefit of a Throne Speech, a sense of Government direction or even a hint that the Government knows what it is doing. It went on to suggest that the nation was ill-served by the Government's unwillingness to clean things up and start with a more or less clean slate.

On Wednesday, April 13, *The Toronto Sun* made the following point again:

Traditionally, each session of Parliament begins with a Throne Speech outlining policies. Throne Speeches are usually made once a year because circumstances change and policies have to adapt them.

On April 14, 1980 the Liberal Government brought down a Speech from the Throne. On that day or in or about that time, unemployment was 7.5 per cent. Today it is running at 12.5 per cent and over two million Canadians are out of work or have simply given up looking for work because the Government has not addressed the problem. Back in 1980 the deficit was \$12.7 billion. It is now at \$27.2 billion with estimates changing daily. Personal bankruptcies have risen substantially, over 50 per cent in the first two months of 1983 as opposed to the first two months of 1980. Interest rates were at 13.5 per cent in 1980. They rose to an horrendous, crippling mortgage interest rate of 22 per cent. They are now down to 12 per cent and 13 per cent, but the Government has done nothing to ensure on a long-range basis that there will be mortgage interest deductibility or mortgage interest rate protection.

There is no protection at all for business people who suffered the same horrendous climbs in prime interest rates from 10 per cent in 1980 to as high as 21 per cent in 1981. It is down now but there should be a Speech from the Throne to address the current problems facing Canadians. We suggest that we should not be operating on a three-year-old Speech from the Throne.

In conclusion, I reiterate our position with respect to the legality of this session of Parliament. I reiterate our solutions, which are not designed to tie up time but to make everything legal. I urge the Government to reconsider its refusal to prorogue, and to bring in a new Speech from the Throne so that we can take time as representatives of the people to assess Canada's opportunities and problems and come up with new approaches. Also I urge the Government to give the country a new sense of direction and to indicate to the people that it is addressing the problems of the day, not running from hole to hole in the dike plugging a finger in here and a finger in there without any overall plan.

Mr. Nielsen: The Prime Minister has got the finger.

Mr. Lewis: The Government should be like a business reporting to its shareholders, or like an organization reporting to its Members. There should be annual reports and financial statements. The Government should review what happened in

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the past year. Then, as in every shareholders' meeting or every meeting of members of any organization, it should look forward and state new policies. I urge the Government to stop drifting on old policies and old theories which may have been applicable in 1980 but are certainly not applicable today, and to do that by proroguing and bringing in a new Speech from the Throne to give the country some sense of direction.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are Hon. Members rising to ask questions of the Hon. Member for Simcoe North (Mr. Lewis)? If not, the Chair will recognize the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard).

• (1125)

Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I first want to comment on the implicit misrepresentation of the constitutional requirement that a session of Parliament be called less than 12 months after the previous session is prorogued. That is included in the motion of my colleague, the spokesman for the Official Opposition on House business. He has quoted from the Constitution Act of 1867, I hope, and not from the British North America Act as he said. The quote is:

There shall be a session of the Parliament of Canada once at least in every year, so that twelve months shall not intervene between the last sitting day of the Parliament in one session and its first sitting day in the next session.

That is what is included in the Constitution Act of 1867 and not in the Canada Act, which was a British Bill. The Section states that there shall be a session in every year without 12 months lapsing in between. That is all it says. It does not say that there shall be a new session every year without 12 months in between. That is the essence of the argument.

This is the point that has to be made. Nothing in our Constitution says that there must be a new session in every year. That is exactly the point. I submit very respectfully that my hon. friend failed in making the point that we have breached the Constitution of Canada. The fact is that there was a session in 1980, there was a session in 1981, there was a session in 1982 and there is a session in 1983. Even if it is the same session, the law has been fulfilled.

On the occasions when sessions have gone more than one year, there have been good reasons for the Government to prolong the session. Legislative catch-up was a factor in 1966-1967. It was also a factor in 1974, 1975, 1976 and in the present session. Massive legislative reform was a factor in 1970, 1971, 1972 and in the present session. Blind obstruction was a factor in 1964, 1965, 1966, 1967 and in the present session.

It is most interesting that in those previous sessions the Official Opposition had in its ranks such legal and parliamentary giants as John Diefenbaker and Ged Baldwin, and they did not object on constitutional grounds. The fact is that only once in recent years has a Government unnecessarily, albeit constitutionally, delayed meeting Parliament. The head of that