

The Address—Mr. MacKay

Mr. Mackasey: I do not profess to have ever suffered poverty, but I can remember the hungry thirties. On Friday nights my father would give me a \$5 bill to change into dimes, and every night my mother would make sandwiches to be handed out to people who knocked on our door the next day. I remember that as vividly as yesterday. What stands between that type of existence and the affluence of 1972 is the unemployment insurance program which provides the worker with some income so that he can retain his dignity and not have to hide in shame from his children who expect to be properly fed and clothed in a country as wealthy as Canada.

Mr. Speaker, as long as I remain in the House of Commons, which may be one more day or one more week or one more month, I will remain a Liberal—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mackasey:—and I will pledge my loyalty to the Prime Minister, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, because I know no other way of being a House of Commons man. In conclusion, may I say to the new members that they should learn to appreciate the House of Commons; it is the only thing that really guarantees democracy in this country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Elmer M. MacKay (Central Nova): Mr. Speaker, it is a distinct honour and privilege to take part in this throne speech debate and to do so under your distinguished guidance and direction. It is also an honour to follow the distinguished member for Verdun (Mr. Mackasey). I congratulate him on parts of his speech, but with other parts I intend to take issue.

Just as this promises to be an interesting year, an interesting parliamentary session, so the Speech from the Throne reflects an increased awareness of the importance of parliament and heightened interest in this great institution by Canadians generally.

Before making my modest contribution, may I, on behalf of myself and my constituents, place on record the respect we had for the late Right Hon. Lester B. Pearson. He was held in great esteem and affection in Nova Scotia, as indeed he was in the entire nation and the international community of nations.

When a junior member such as I looks at the contents of this Speech from the Throne, he is perhaps—at least I am—in doubt as to whether he should be more concerned with its direct effect on Canada as a whole or the very real concern it has for his constituency. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, in perusing this Speech from the Throne, and indeed having listened to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) expound upon it, there does not at this stage appear to be much rejoicing to be done, for me at least, on either the constituency or national aspect.

I commend the government for finally recognizing, at least by implication, that freight rates do have an impact on economic development and consumer prices. What a penetrating look at the obvious, Mr. Speaker! I find it ironic that the government permitted so much time to expire during its previous term in office without having come up with any national transportation policy, only now evidencing concern. It is high time that railways were

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examined, and not only freight policies but maintenance policies. Roadbeds are becoming unsafe because of unsatisfactory maintenance. Pensions for railway employees need examination as well, as the distinguished member for Verdun has just said.

With reference to the hon. gentleman, I should like in passing to comment that he is still dragging the heavy water red herring into the House of Commons.

An hon. Member: It is no red herring.

Mr. MacKay: I should like to refer him and hon. members opposite to a speech made by a former colleague of his, the hon. member for Trinity (Mr. Hellyer), last spring. He knows where most of the blame lies; it lies on this government which is trying to place this unjust and unfair aspect on the leader of this party. Mr. Speaker, this does not say much for their sense of fairness or accuracy.

There is in the throne speech more high-handed philosophy, and statements such as this:

To preserve the ecological integrity of Canada's coastal and maritime areas, further presentation will be made for the third United Nations Law of the Sea Conference.

Laudable and overdue as this stated objective may be, what our hard-pressed fishermen want is some direct, practical help. To repay them to some extent for the neglect of the past they want protection from encroachment by foreign fishing fleets, they want adequate compensation for being forced out of their livelihood, and they want treatment to make up for their loss of sick mariner benefits and their fishing bounty.

In agriculture, the farmer in eastern Canada has little to rejoice about either in terms of actual or promised aid by this government. No plans for a regional approach for problems peculiar to eastern Canadian farmers are evidenced in this Speech from the Throne.

There is nothing to indicate that, pursuant to its announced intention to assist home owners, the government intends to remove one of the greatest direct costs to prospective home owners, the 11 per cent federal sales tax on building materials. The government can do all it likes to make it easier to buy a house, but what about the cost and the unfortunate fact that between interest, taxes, etc., the buyer will be saddled with a mortgage for the rest of his life because so few young Canadians can afford the price of a new home? Please, let us attack the initial cost for houses, and let us take this inequitable tax away, as a beginning.

One of the most intriguing and promising statements in the Speech from the Throne was the reference to the much heralded Department of Regional Economic Expansion. This is a good program, or could be. It is an equitable concept following the bipartisan line of thought that results in the sort of benevolent federalism that was responsible over the years for equalization payments, the recognition that the richer provinces should help the poorer and recognizing there should be equality of opportunity, economically as well as linguistically. However, somehow the government has in its familiar way failed to co-ordinate and develop its philosophy and in a practical or meaningful way to develop a comprehensive industrial strategy and policy for Canada.