

*The Address—Mr. La Salle*

blatant lack of specific measures to cope with a problem hurting all Canada, inflation. That concerns not only members of the House but also the great majority of Canadians.

I also have in mind a few points raised particularly by the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), particularly on bilingualism which is a question that concerns me in a very special way. He discussed the importance of its implementation in the civil service which I strongly support. He hopes that this movement will soon be irreversible on a short-term basis in the civil service. I think that the right hon. Prime Minister's wish is shared by the head of my party and also by many members on this side of the House. Personally, I hope that this wish will come true and I think this will be a great justice rendered to those who are French-speaking and who have had complaints for a long time.

I would also like to discuss certain opinions that were given in this House concerning Bill 22. I would like to reassure those who are worried and tell them not to be too concerned with this bill that the Quebec government has recently adopted. I would also like to say that I will always do everything in my power to support the use of the French language in the province of Quebec. In my opinion, no hon. member can blame us on this point because I think that we can say that, as Quebecers, we have always respected the wishes of the minority. Anyway, we accept the situation of the majority in this country. And in the province of Quebec there are people who strongly wish to use the French language. It is a need. Besides, the Prime Minister has made his opinion known and I support him on this. Bill 22 does not seem to satisfy everyone in the province of Quebec. A certain group finds that the bill does not go far enough, another finds that it goes too far. In any event, I believe that we cannot condemn the majority of Quebecers for favoring the use of French. As Quebecers, we must demand, as the public service is doing, that the French language be used for the large proportion of French-speaking people in the country.

We could perhaps also ask ourselves some questions. I know that the government of Quebec has long requested that the federal government grant it additional powers for selecting immigrants. If the federal government had agreed, perhaps the government of Quebec would not have had to pass a law which seems very hard for a certain group even though it does not bother me, Madam Speaker. Perhaps the federal government should have replied by giving concrete examples to such requests from the Quebec government, which would have allowed Quebec to direct immigrants towards the French language immediately on their arrival in Quebec.

I also noted an important aspect of the speech of the Prime Minister, when he talked about amendments to our procedure and to the rules of this House and I have heard other members underline this fact. We must recognize that the present rules allow us to do stupid things, but they do not force us to do so.

We also know that throughout the years, we have used these rules as we liked, too often to gain electoral advantages. I therefore hope that I shall not shock anyone by asking this question. I believe that we have abused these rules. In my opinion, the Prime Minister has made a

suggestion that is interesting but which could be improved, and in this way, we could also better ourselves.

Madam Speaker, regardless of the changes that we can make, if each member wants to use the rules in his own way, this House can always be prevented from being as effective as we would wish.

We will do something worth while first by changing the atmosphere in the House. But partisanship unfortunately exists too often. I do not want to blame anybody, because I could perhaps accuse everybody including myself of showing at times that tendency to agree or disagree with a measure according as it is electorally profitable or not. But I believe the people are greatly worried about the behaviour of each member in this House. That could be greatly improved before we consider changing the standing orders. That would improve tremendously the efficiency of this House and would arouse among Canadians much greater confidence than they now have towards parliament members or parliament itself.

That is regrettable but such is the system, Madam Speaker, and I often deplored it. We have a party system of course, and it is always regrettable to feel that the government is introducing measures which too often are unfortunately geared to electoral profitability. It is also a matter of regret to feel that the opposition tends as well to stand in opposition for election purposes. And such has been the case since long before 1968 and the government members who blame the opposition for adopting an inflexible stance did the same when the roles were reversed. We could have seen the same thing if the government had changed.

I believe we should sincerely consider our stand as parliament members, our responsibilities. What are our responsibilities as government members or as opposition members? As opposition members, I believe it is our responsibility to stimulate the government, to invite it, to encourage it, to force it to introduce measures taking into account the welfare of the population as a whole. That is the duty of a member of the opposition.

● (1530)

I want to emphasize them, Madam Speaker, because I have often had the opportunity of talking about them outside the House. As to the possible procedural changes, I suggest we must be willing to change ourselves first. We must confess that we have often failed—and I state this objectively—in respect of the aspirations of the Canadian people who gave us their confidence. It is therefore our duty to demand enormously from the government and to support the best pieces of legislation which are introduced. We must force the government into accelerating things, instead of looking for all sorts of ways to deprive it of an image which may be flattering during an election campaign.

I prefer to say to my constituents that I have seconded some measures, whether they came from the opposition or from the government, after being assured of their value, rather than saying that being in the opposition I had to vote against the government. I find such an attitude negative and I regret that because of a system, of an institution, of a tradition or a custom, we often find embarrass-