

The Address—Mr. Gleave

Housing Act that will provide more help for Canadians to buy houses.

• (1510)

Hon. members opposite are asking, "What is your legislative priority?" I have asked the opposition House leaders to make suggestions. We will bring forward a program just as quickly as we can complete the debate on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne, which will be concluded tomorrow night hopefully, or Wednesday night. Then we will proceed with items on the order paper. We will try to deal responsibly with the conflicting demands on the time of the House. We shall deal with economic issues and other matters, including supply, which must be dealt with by the House. At least, the House must be given an opportunity to deal with that question. Then, there is the all-important issue of capital punishment. We will balance all this and present a program to the House. The government has declared its intention in the Speech from the Throne, and in speeches made by ministers, that it is prepared to produce a program to put before the House and to accept the consequences of a minority situation. We intend to live up to our side of the commitment. In this case, the government will pose and the House will dispose. Those are the rules of the game that I fully and enthusiastically accept and under which I wish to work.

Mr. A. P. Gleave (Saskatoon-Biggar): Mr. Speaker, may I, as previous hon. members have done, express my appreciation of your election as Speaker of the House and say how glad I am to see Your Honour once again undertaking former duties. In my speech this afternoon I want to talk to some extent about farmers and agriculture. First, I want to make a few general comments about the Speech from the Throne which is, I suppose one might say, a declaration of intent on the part of the government. The government has laid out its view of the Canadian economy and of the situation of the Canadian people at this time. The throne speech refers to the needs of the Canadian people and of those things that need to be corrected. It covers much ground and much of that cannot be dealt with at once. I suppose, as is often the case in the affairs of man, we will need patience in the matter. I think that many in Canada may not have as much patience as some of us here have.

Let me note some of those items that are mentioned in the Speech. There is access to foreign markets. Grain exports are expected to grow. There is a commitment to job expansion. Capital works projects are mentioned. It is about time they were recognized. According to the throne speech special attention will be given to the four western provinces. There is a reference to a meeting to be held between the governments of those provinces and the federal government. That will be good for the medium and long term. There is also a proposal, already before the House, to examine food prices and how those prices are affecting the Canadian people. We are told that those prices have increased by 5 per cent in the past year. The one thing I want to do, Mr. Speaker, is keep a few things in perspective.

The other day the oil companies, that is those which refine our fuel, in concert announced a 2 cent per gallon

[Mr. MacEachen.]

increase in the price of diesel fuel. That represents an 8 per cent increase in one of the most important inputs affecting the operation of the grain farmer of western Canada and of the other farmers across Canada. I noticed that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Macdonald) showed a good deal of equanimity when he was questioned in the House the other day on this subject. He did not seem to be bothered because this extra charge was to be visited on the food producers and, indeed, the general public of this country. It was no great concern of his.

I was first elected to this House in 1968. Between 1968 and 1972, Gulf Oil discontinued its refinery operations in Saskatoon. Imperial Oil is now about ready to completely discontinue the operation of its refinery in Regina. Perhaps that move has already been completed. Mr. Speaker, as a Member of Parliament representing Saskatoon, I protested against the discontinuance of the refinery operation there, partly because that action would take away from Saskatoon many relatively well paying jobs, because after all the petroleum industry is one of the better paying industries, and partly because that industry was developed in Saskatoon without any DREE grants, special assistance or anything like that. Like the co-operative refinery in Regina, it grew and developed by raising its own capital. When I and some officials in Saskatoon inquired why the Imperial oil operation was being discontinued, the answer we were given was that the move would result in greater efficiency. In so many words, the answer we were given was "Never mind, you small town boys; you do not know what this is all about. We will close down this operation and create a big refinery somewhere else, and the result will be greater efficiency." What is the result of that efficiency now, Mr. Speaker? The result is another 2 cents per gallon on the price of diesel fuel. That increase, as I said before, the minister responsible viewed with a good deal of equanimity. Let me tell him that the people in Saskatchewan do not view it with equanimity. There are people in Saskatchewan now who are saying that if the oil industry of Canada cannot do better than that, we had better nationalize it.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gleave: You do not have to be an out and out socialist to find that the performance of the oil companies is entirely unacceptable. You need not be anything but an ordinary farmer who is getting doggone tired of being gouged. That is all. So, Mr. Speaker, I do not think you need look too far to fathom the reason for the shortage of fuel oil in the United States. Those in responsible positions have decided it is more important to bomb North Viet Nam than to heat the United States.

• (1520)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gleave: We in this country should not have to pay extra money for fuel oil for that reason. The people of the United States can decide their priorities. They are a sovereign nation as are we. They decide their priorities and we should decide our priorities. Our priorities should be an efficient refining system which passes on some of the benefits of increased productivity and increased efficien-