

*The Address—Mr. Lang*

contributions were noteworthy indeed and have begun this session of parliament in an auspicious way.

I am particularly pleased to participate in this debate, Mr. Speaker, because of the nature of the document to which we are giving consideration. The throne speech is a positive and constructive document and holds substantial promise for all Canadians. It is a document which I believe will prove to be truly historic to western Canadians—historic in the fundamental way that it commits this nation to the spirit of the Western Economic Opportunities Conference and to the task of pressing toward the full achievement of the crucial objectives identified and espoused in Calgary last July.

The western conference, which was conceived of and called by this government, and in particular by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), provided an essential national forum for the expression of basic western concerns. The government of Canada and the entire nation were watching and listening, and hearing a good many things about the vast western portion of this country which perhaps were never fully understood before. The grievances, the inequities, the discontent, the so-called alienation, are real. In western Canada the problems have been growing steadily for some considerable length of time. This goes back through a succession of governments involving different political stripes.

Let me take the House back to just over a year ago now. The throne speech of January, 1973 which opened the first session of this parliament represented a key breakthrough for westerners in the quest to re-establish for themselves a new role within confederation. That throne speech gave fundamental recognition to the problems lying at the root of their discontent—formal and concrete recognition for the first time in the history of this nation. That throne speech, too, committed Canada to doing something about those problems, and the first step was to be a conference on western economic opportunities.

The Prime Minister invited the western premiers to come together to discuss with him and with other representatives of the government of Canada the basic things that had to be done to build for the west a proper place in Canada's great nationhood. In preparation for that historic meeting the resources of this land were brought by this government to focus powerfully upon all aspects of the problem. Literally thousands of man hours were devoted to the job; nearly every department and agency at the national level has been involved.

Why was this, Mr. Speaker? Because this government, the Trudeau government, was determined, and remains determined, to get at the roots of that thing we call western alienation, to tackle the real causes and to eliminate them. As the Prime Minister has so aptly described this federal initiative, no other single project, outside of wartime, so fully occupied the time, the talents and the resources of the government of Canada. The throne speech confirms our dedication and our continuing work.

● (1250)

The Calgary conference touched upon a broad spectrum of issues: The need for regionally sensitive financial institutions; the need for a more decentralized approach for the government itself; the need for a broadly based, stable and

productive agricultural sector; the need to diversify economic activities in the west and to build new industrial strength upon the west's great resource and energy base, and the need to develop a fair and impartial system of transportation free from inequities and discrimination. In all these areas we have come a long way since last July, and the Speech from the Throne at this time discloses further initiatives.

We are in the course of evolving and implementing a new national policy. The task is not a simple one. The answers to a hundred or so years of western dissatisfaction are not found easily and painlessly. If they were, perhaps even some Conservative administrations of days gone by might have found and applied them. Tories always seem to have the sure, quick, simple ready-made remedy, at least while they are not in government and not at all responsible for trying to do the job.

It is rather interesting, I believe, to look back to July 1973 and to examine just how far we have come in the last seven and a half months with these western economic questions and initiatives. As a westerner it is exciting for me to see the progress that has in fact been made, in concrete and specific fact, and to look ahead to the greater goals highlighted in the Speech from the Throne.

In Calgary we talked of decentralization, and we see a move toward decentralization of governmental operations highlighted in the proposed centering in Saskatchewan of the western regional headquarters of the Department of Regional Economic Expansion, a move that will reverse the proportion of persons in that department serving in Ottawa and in the rest of the country with approximately 70 per cent of that department spread out in different parts of the country. This decentralization is not just a paper thing, not just a matter of persons being located out in the regions, but a move which places real decision making responsibility up to the level of an assistant deputy minister who is to be located there.

I might also mention the additional location of the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce operations throughout the country and other moves that have taken that direction. We see a move toward a federal business development bank which is to be more sensitive to the various interests of the regions of this country, to be located more effectively in them. We see also moves on the part of the Department of Supply and Services, a continuing exercise in an attempt to spread purchasing in this country throughout the different parts, as well as a move toward allowing for participation of the provinces in the banks throughout this country to promote decentralization of our banking institutions. We see, too, the pledge for further processing of resources being carried a step further with the introduction of the export-import act, which will allow for the control of movement out of this country of our resources in an unprocessed state, if that is required, to encourage further processing here. That must be of particular interest to a resource-rich area such as western Canada.

In the area of transportation policy, the throne speech pledges an end to the discrimination in freight rates which has aggravated westerners for so long. Work is well underway toward that end. A federal-provincial committee of officials has been hard at work since last July, and there