

In the time allocated to me I should like to deal with some aspects of the Speech from the Throne and then, if I may, with some of the remarks made by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. If I may first deal with the Speech from the Throne in a most serious vein, never have we as Canadians experienced a time of greater unease and worry than today. We are worrying about the future of our homes, the future of our jobs and the future of our country.

I think that the Speech from the Throne was looked forward to by Canadians with perhaps more than the usual expectation. Most citizens were aware that we were approaching the time when we would be facing a federal election, so most of them expected a Speech from the Throne in which the government would try by every conceivable means to encourage voters to support it. I think they also expected that demonstrated in the Speech from the Throne would be an easily understandable program for Canada which would serve to assuage some of the uneasiness that Canadians are experiencing today.

Those of us who heard the Speech from the Throne and have listened to interpretations of it via the media, the press, radio and television, must certainly have realized almost immediately that the Speech from the Throne itself was nebulous, ethereal, that it did not come to grips with the basic problems facing us today. Like most speeches from the throne that we have heard lately, it dealt with considerations, contemplations, promises of action for the future. But in no way did it give concrete evidence that the government would come to grips with the problems that are bothering Canadians today.

• (1620)

As Canadians, we have two things to go on in considering our government. This government is approaching an election. We want to know what the government's program will be. As opposition members, we want to know what we will be up against when we go out to face the people. The people of Canada want to know what the government is proposing for them.

At a recent meeting in Ottawa, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) is reported to have assured his party followers that one of the biggest problems facing their party today is that Canadians in general are not familiar with that party's accomplishments and record. Well, in the short time allocated to me this afternoon I will try to put on record some of those accomplishments. I begin by saying that some of the government's achievements are achievements that no government could have been expected to accomplish in a single term of office. I speak of the highest unemployment rate in the history of Canada, of the highest cost of living to which Canadians have ever been subjected, of the highest rents, the highest interest rates, the greatest number of business failures, the greatest budgetary deficit and the greatest amount of confusion that this country has ever witnessed.

Why any Prime Minister would urge his government to go out and face the country on the basis of that record is beyond me. That indicates to me that here is another record. Here we have a Prime Minister who

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actually has less conception than anybody else as to how the people of the country feel about his record.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Danforth: Mr. Speaker, no one in this country in any way doubts the intellectual capacities of our Prime Minister. What bothers me is that in approaching our major problems the Prime Minister seems to be obsessed with the idea that in arriving at solutions he must apply some kind of scientific policy of balance and counterbalance. In other words, when he is faced with a force, he tries to summon a counterforce to meet it. It appears that he likes to sit back and, in an intellectual way, observe what actually happens and then react on the basis of his observations. That might be all right as an intellectual exercise in a university or college, but such an approach has been almost fatal for Canada and is one of the basic reasons for our present dilemma.

To illustrate my point may I give examples of this force and counterforce of which I have spoken and show how tragic is the result. One of the things we face today in Canada that is most divisive is the pitting of French versus English. The Prime Minister, by policies which were subject to interpretation and misinterpretation, has caused these two factions to become polarized in Canada to a degree we have never before experienced. I am terribly afraid that extremists on both sides will be using this polarization as a lever to divide our country further.

Then a program was initiated deliberately which turned consumers against retailers to such a degree that the government was encouraged to set up the Department of Consumer Affairs. There again, one Canadian faction was pitted against another Canadian faction. Also, labour was pitted against management. Not only did this government not attempt to anticipate labour problems; it seemed almost gleefully to anticipate them, to see what would happen in a confrontation. The way this government has dealt with unions involved in the public service gives further credence to the point I am trying to establish.

No one will deny that in Canada today there is antagonism between the provinces and the federal government and that we are not making progress in co-operation between the provinces and the federal governments to the degree experienced in the past. The situation has not been helped by some of the pronouncements of the right hon. gentleman regarding the character of some of the premiers of the provinces. That is another instance of force and counterforce. I could go on. Tremendous emphasis has been put on the matter of youth versus the establishment. We know about the tremendous emotional impact of legislation dealing with human problems. I am speaking of abortion and all the other aspects of that particular bill.

The latest action that is causing consternation across this country is the apparently deliberate attempt to cause a division of feeling in this country toward the United States. To illustrate further what I mean by balance and counterbalance, let me say this: it is reported that our Prime Minister, during his visit to