

The Address—Mr. Clark

according to the columnist, Wayne Cheveldayoff, his officials privately quote different figures, figures which they consider to be more accurate than the inflated figures cited by the minister. Again, this minister claims that the dollar is floating, but he pumps out \$4.3 billion in exchange reserves to support it.

As the House will recall, last year the Prime Minister refused to establish a parliamentary committee on the constitution. This year he named one. I see the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lang) is not in the House. Perhaps he is out looking for a fourth portfolio. One week the Minister of Justice said that there was no need to refer the Senate proposals to the Supreme Court. The next week he referred them. In the spring the government said that it had cut as much spending as possible. In August it reversed itself. Just today two different ministers abandoned two more restraint programs. The tax lawyer who is the Liberal candidate in the constituency of Westmount proposed deductibility of mortgage interest payments. The Prime Minister attacked it by saying that it only helps the rich. Then of course he went on to define the rich as being anyone who owns a home, or anyone in Canada who wants to own a home.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: I would not want to forget the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Horner), although everyone else has.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: The Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce has made his usual considered contribution to this debate. He said that in Canada a home is a luxury and that it is the policy of this government to tax luxuries.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Horner: The hon. member is deliberately misquoting me.

Mr. Clark: I regret the echoes this brings to the hon. member for Crowfoot, but we have him on tape.

Facing all the difficulties of the country, in effect the Prime Minister said that there is nothing we can do. Perhaps I should put my hands in my belt loops if I am to quote him correctly, but he said, "We are a healthy country in a difficult world". Let us take a look at that difficult world and what has been happening in countries which have much less in resources than Canada but much more in leadership than Canada. When the government came to office, Canada had the second highest standard of living in the world. Today we have the seventh, after ten years of this government.

Mr. Trudeau: Name the others. Name them.

Mr. Clark: Our unemployment rate is the worst in the industrialized world. Our inflation rate is the second worst, second only to Italy. The problem is not with the world and not with this country. The problem is that we have a government which refuses to act, and which has governed so badly in recent

years that the situation in Canada is very much worse than it needs to be.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: Before we can as a parliament cure a condition, first of all it is necessary to know what went wrong. I believe that basically two things have gone wrong in the last several years, both of which are the direct fault of the manner in which the government approaches its responsibilities.

Despite all the talk about unity, the style of the government has been consistent: to provoke confrontation among Canadians. For example, where it was the style of the late Honourable Lester B. Pearson to try to bring Canadians together, it has become the consistent style of this government, and this Prime Minister particularly, to attempt to pose as the tough guy, picking out some group of Canadians against which the government of all the people of Canada would stand up. The victims have changed. Once it was the farmers—why should he sell their wheat? Since then it has been labour unions, businessmen, the public service, and women who want to work. Is it a terrible thing for women to want to work? The Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance perennially cite them as the cause of high unemployment figures in the country.

Miss MacDonald: Shame!

Mr. Clark: Also he attacks Canadians who, in the words of the Prime Minister, have gone soft. Those soft Canadians are probably the same ones as those rich Canadians who want to own homes. At one time or another he has tried to make a victim out of almost every premier in the country. For a government whose job is to speak for the whole country, this government has shown a disconcerting tendency to speak against most Canadians at one time or another. You can only do that for so long; you can only get away with that for so long. Nature made this a difficult country to govern, but the practice of picking out victims to blame has made that job immeasurably more difficult.

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Secondly, there has been a fundamental failure to trust the institutions and the agencies in Canada outside government. Consequently there has been, during the ten years of this government, a steady pattern of taking power away from other agencies in our society and concentrating power in the Ottawa government. That pattern has obviously applied to the economy. Whatever it says now, this government does not trust the millions of Canadians involved in Canadian business to make economic decisions.

There has been a steady growth in the attempt of the central government to direct and control private economic decisions. That is why we have this form of competition bill. That is why the government established Petro-Can, and why it wants Air Canada to buy Nordair. That is why it keeps control of other Crown corporations like Eldorado Nuclear and Northern Transportation Limited which would operate better outside government. That is why there has been such a growth in