

The Address—Mr. Cafik

It is obvious that because the government has not been able to hold the line on domestic causes of inflation it is now trying to cover up its own incompetence. At the same time, the Prime Minister said recently in a radio interview that over the next 12 months he cannot see a lowering of the cost of living, which suggests that he and the government are openly admitting that they cannot cope with our inflation problem. In view of these facts the only recourse Canadians have is to follow the advice of the Prime Minister given on December 30, 1973 when he said: "If a government can't cope with self-induced inflation, it deserves to be thrown out".

Mr. McRae: Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Yewchuk: I would be very happy to do so.

Mr. McRae: In view of the fact that an interdepartmental committee of the government of the province of Alberta on the Athabasca tar sands suggested that a plant should not be brought on-stream more rapidly than once every four years, is the hon. member not concerned that the more rapid development of the tar sands he suggests will create serious environmental and social dislocation in the community he represents?

Mr. Yewchuk: I am sorry I did not hear the question. I wonder if the hon. member would mind repeating it.

Mr. McRae: In view of the report of the Alberta government interdepartmental committee on the tar sands which suggested that plants should not be brought on-stream more than once every four years, is the hon. member not concerned that the more rapid development which he seems to suggest as desirable would create environmental and social dislocation in his constituency?

Mr. Yewchuk: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I am concerned.

Mr. Norman A. Cafik (Ontario): Mr. Speaker, like those who preceded me in the throne speech debate, I want to congratulate the Governor General and Madame Léger on their assumption of their important roles. I was very impressed with his remarks during the ceremony when he was sworn in, as I thought they were very timely and very profound. He covered many of the basic questions with which we as Canadians must cope. I am confident he will perform his functions as Governor General, with the aid of Madame Léger, in a superb manner, and will represent Her Majesty here in Canada in a way that will be a real credit to all Canadians.

Second, I should like to congratulate the mover and seconder, the hon. members for Spadina (Mr. Stollery) and Sherbrooke (Mr. Pelletier) on their very excellent speeches in moving and seconding the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne. In addition I should like to congratulate the new Chief Justice of Canada on his appointment. I take particular pleasure in this because of the number of communications I have received from constituents of mine who were deeply impressed with the government's action in appointing this man as the Chief Justice of Canada in view of the great reputation he enjoys as a person concerned about civil rights and other matters of importance to all Canadians.

● (1650)

I was very pleased to be present in this House when the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) spoke on leader's day in this debate. Personally, I thought it was one of the finest speeches I ever heard delivered in this House of Commons since I was elected in 1968. I do not say that simply because he is the Prime Minister. I have had the opportunity to say that on numerous occasions before in similar debates but have not chosen to do so. I was deeply impressed with what he said, and particularly the philosophical base he provided for his statement at that particular time.

Before proceeding to make specific remarks in this throne speech debate, I should like to make some comment on what was said by one of the earlier speakers, the hon. member for Malpeque (Mr. MacLean), whom I hold in great esteem and consider a personal friend. While I was in the House he spent some time talking about the high cost of government expenditures. I have heard a great deal about that from all sides of the House, but I was disappointed that he did not choose to tell us in what areas he would like to see a reduction in expenditures. It is very easy to say that expenditures are too high. Anyone can say that. However, I think it takes some real study to calculate where the reduction should be. Should we be reducing the old age security benefits, the guaranteed income supplement and so on which have an enormous impact on the federal budget? Should we be knocking out the New Horizons Program and the community employment program, and should we not have the escalation provision in our social security programs? I believe that all these things are socially desirable.

Mr. Yewchuk: Start with Information Canada.

Mr. Cafik: I might mention Information Canada, but is that really so significant an expenditure? It amounts to \$10 million when we are looking at billions of dollars in respect of social security programs in the last year. I do not think one should attempt to pick out items on which many members might find agreement. We should look at the really substantive issues in respect of which the government is spending large amounts of money.

In order to give an example of the kind of attitude exhibited by some members, perhaps for political purposes, I might refer to the meetings of the Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs during the first session of the twenty-ninth Parliament when I was representing my minister, the Minister of National Health and Welfare, as a witness. There was a good deal of discussion concerning whether the adoption of the escalation clause in respect of old age security, family allowances and so on, was in fact fanning the fires of inflation. We discussed this at some considerable length. As I recall it, this subject was brought up by three members of the Conservative Party at one particular meeting. I wanted to know whether, in fact, they were suggesting that these particular social programs should not be subject to escalation. No one wanted to say that. They wanted us to bear the brunt of the criticism by suggesting that the provision for escalation would fan the fires of inflation. I wanted to know whether, in fact, they were willing to put their money where their mouth was and vote against the escalation