

*The Address—Mr. Fortin*

adoption of a declaration of human rights. This piece of legislation was, so to speak, an extension of the universal declaration of human rights proposed by the United Nations ten years ago. It would, of course, be inappropriate at this time to discuss the bill at length. I should like to stress, however, that it is of particular interest in view of its future effects. I would even go so far as to suggest that this piece of legislation is one of the most important ever brought before this parliament. As an illustration of the importance, in the minds of the people, of a bill of this nature, it would be sufficient to mention that last December, seminars were held in many towns of Canada to mark the tenth anniversary of the United Nations universal declaration of human rights. Since then, the question has often been raised as to whether the bill as drafted is adequate to ensure effective protection of individual freedoms. Many consider that it is. Others argue that it would be preferable if this legislation were embodied in our constitution. I will only say at this time that the bill, as it now reads, is a step in the right direction, and may I emphasize that the principle of the bill has received unanimous approval.

Canada, admittedly, is still a young country. We are still developing and I think I can safely say that we are still a long way from full economic, political and cultural development.

Therefore, since we now enjoy these freedoms, since they are ours without our realizing it, we have assimilated them, so to speak, in our minds and in our hearts, and it is time that we take adequate steps to protect them.

If in many countries, steps had been taken to protect the individual freedoms, these countries would not find themselves under the totalitarian yoke of a government which subordinates mind to matter, spiritual values to materialism and, finally, the will of the people to coercion.

The members of the house will be called upon to declare that human freedoms have always existed in Canada and will always exist in the future.

I do not wish to discuss the bill in full detail, but I would like to point out a section which, in my opinion, is important, in view of its potential repercussions. I refer to freedom of the press.

[Mr. Fortin.]

The press plays an extremely important part in our way of life, a part that involves great responsibilities. These responsibilities stem from the fact that it behooves the press to shape national consciousness and the life of our people. It is most important that the press enjoy the greatest degree of freedom, that it always be at its best, that it constantly strive towards a noble goal and that it always seek to safeguard the fine traditions of our Canadian journalism.

Mr. Speaker, the financial situation of this country, in my opinion, gives no cause for worry. Quite happily, the hon. Minister of Finance (Mr. Fleming), who had been particularly well trained for the position he now holds, took adequate measures to prevent the particularly difficult situation which was looming. Already, the mere fact of removing credit restrictions has favoured a substantial strengthening of business, has brought renewed optimism to the people of Canada and given confidence to our businessmen. Incidentally, may I be allowed to offer him my sincere congratulations for the spectacular success of the conversion campaign of 1958. In fact, five victory loans totalled \$6 billion and, after only a few days of campaigning, \$5 billion 800 million were converted. In my opinion, this success is altogether amazing.

The present government, even after being challenged to do so, was successful in reducing taxes in the amount of \$200 million, and in record time. However, we can now look forward to a more optimistic stabilization in national affairs.

When considering, for instance, the field of home building, it is noted that all contractors concurred in the belief that the year 1958 would be a bad year; it was, nevertheless, the best that we have known and I think that the increase amounts to about \$110 million. Moreover, the year 1959 already gives indications that prosperity is coming back, and coming back to stay.

In the international field, it is interesting to note the extraordinary progress made by Canada in particular. Since the end of the war, we had always expected a situation which sometimes proved difficult and sometimes more comforting. The unity which, at one time, was more particularly reached amongst the members of NATO was such that a new power rose in the world in order to offset, in some measure, communist influence.