

*The Address—Mr. Drew*

tive way of dealing with disloyalty of the kind which would appear to be contemplated by that reference.

Surely there can never have been a less revealing speech from the throne than that which is now before us. While the word "emergency" is used, there is no sense of that urgency which is in keeping with the nature of the emergency with which we are confronted.

Except for the statement that the government will seek additional powers by order in council to "ensure adequate defence preparations . . . and to prevent economic dislocation," there is nothing whatever which tells us what the government really intends to do. We may have had some hint from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Abbott) this afternoon when he suggested that if controls were to come they would be dealt with under this power which the government will seek and to which this statement refers. My own impression was that the government had taken adequate powers for that purpose last September—powers which it has failed to exercise.

We all recognize that in the speech from the throne it is not intended to go into extensive detail as to legislation or as to other action that the government will take. It should, however, lay before us a clear indication of the course the government intends to follow in relation to those subjects which are of major concern. At a time when the members of this house and the people of Canada should know exactly what the government intends to do, we have before us a government statement skilfully drafted to give the appearance of recognizing the issues which are before us, while at the same time carefully withholding from us any real information as to what steps are to be taken to assure our survival as a free nation.

It was for that reason that I suggested in a letter to the Prime Minister yesterday that we should adopt the practice which has proved so satisfactory in the British House of Commons. I urged that there should be separate debates on external affairs, national defence, and the cost of living, so that we might receive statements from the government as to what they propose to do and might have an opportunity to present suggestions in an orderly way in relation to those particular subjects. Had this suggestion been acted upon we would all have known something about the plans of the government before proceeding with this debate. May I say that I for one have no desire to see an interruption of this debate. At this extremely critical time, when we are debating our approval or otherwise of the program of the government, we should have

some idea of what the government actually intends to do. The vote on the motion to approve the speech from the throne is interpreted as a vote supporting the general proposals of the government for the session. That is why it is taken as the major test of confidence that the government faces in this and any similar parliament. The speech from the throne gives us no real information on which it would be possible to say whether those proposals are satisfactory or otherwise. The introduction into this debate by the various ministers of statements which cover such a wide field is not, I believe, a satisfactory way to lay a foundation for constructive discussion of issues upon the determination of which to a considerable degree our whole future will depend. Without that information it is impossible to discuss details at a time when all of us are anxious to come to grips with reality.

The chilling truth is that never since our civilization emerged from the dark ages has that civilization—and even freedom itself—been so gravely threatened with extinction as it is at this very hour. The people of Canada have never shown themselves unwilling to face reality, but they must be given that leadership which only a government, with all its channels of secret information and its large staffs of technical experts, is in a position to give. Individuals may express their opinions. In the end, however, there is naturally a tendency to think that the government, with its special sources of information in regard to international and domestic affairs, particularly in critical times such as these, is in a position to pass judgment upon the best available information—which may not be available to others who are expressing opinions which may be regarded as sincere but not completely informed.

The people of Canada are waiting to be told, in clear and challenging terms, the extent and nature of their duties. They will not fail to respond to a clear call to duty and an appeal to that spirit of service which has built a strong and vigorous young nation within so short a time.

I fully recognize the heavy responsibilities and burdens which the government carries at this time, as does every other free government which must be subjected to the ordinary tests of democratic discussion, criticism and exchange of ideas. In all that will advance the national interest the government will receive our full support, and I am confident it will receive the support of all hon. members where the issues are plain and where it is abundantly clear that what is proposed is for the continuing advantage of Canada in these very difficult days.