

*The Address—Mr. Wagner*

people of this country to say that things need not get any worse, and that we are prepared to take the measures necessary to ensure that they do not. It is the gap between those who have and those who have not that poses the greatest threat to the stability of our society. This government faces real, concrete challenges to the economic and social stability of this country.

[Translation]

If, as I mentioned earlier, inflation has become the major concern of this session, if leadership has become the main subject of discussion, as it was during the election campaign and during the past two years of minority government, this problem which most concerns us is not the only one. There are other problems for which the leadership of the right hon. Prime Minister is lacking.

I would now like to deal one by one with the remarks of the right hon. Prime Minister who, in his wisdom, his omniscience, decided not to talk about inflation in his first speech. I notice that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Corriveau) is applauding because the right hon. Prime Minister did not talk about inflation in his first speech in this House. However, the farmers will think about it.

Very suavely and with obvious intelligence, astuteness and brilliance, the right hon. Prime Minister mentioned problems which could be used as a diversion, which could be used as a cotton pad drenched in chloroform to be applied on Parliament and the Canadian people. He thought he could put the members of Parliament and the country to sleep by not mentioning the number 1 problem and by talking instead about related problems which are also important, but which certainly do not have the priority that the problem of inflation should have.

Madam Speaker, the question of parliamentary reform was mentioned by the right honourable Prime Minister. What did he say about this? On October 2, he said, as is reported in *Hansard*:

—this institution must express the collective will effectively and completely.

And what is the right honourable Prime Minister suggesting to achieve this? Does he really attack the problem in depth or does he deal only with procedural issues, with the superficial? We heard him say that it would be a good idea for the opposition to give him questions in advance so that he may have the time to prepare his answers. In a way, this would make some sense. We would not get the silly and frivolous answers we are getting every day. But he says questions should be made in advance. Perhaps we should broadcast the debates in this House over television and radio.

Maybe the opposition members should limit themselves to two or three speeches, whereas they are the people's spokesmen in important debates. We should proceed quickly, as if speed meant efficiency. We should always be filled with wonder at what is going on in Westminster. And there is the Prime Minister, back in Westminster where he applauds all debates in the House. And half an hour later, we shall hear him coming back from Westminster from where he wants to repatriate the Canadian constitution. To me, those are inconsistencies in the mind of the Prime Minister.

[Mr. Wagner.]

● (1420)

[English]

Mr. Speaker, I hear them; they are as impressive here today as they were when they were travelling in Saint-Hyacinthe this summer.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

Mr. Wagner: Instead of encouraging superficial "procedurizing", the Prime Minister should have told the parliamentarians: first, let us proceed to give a completely new value to Canadian parliamentarianism. Second, let us do away with these abusive privileges of the executive which consist in hiding from the parliamentarians and the population certain things which should normally be known to all, as we have recently seen in the Supreme Court of Canada. Third, for example, he could have addressed himself to the problems facing the government which hides behind the pretext of state security whenever it does not want to disclose relevant facts to the federal administration. Fourth, the estimates could be considered openly instead of being subject to the guillotine as is now the case. That would be a real reform in depth. Fifth, Parliament could be allowed to take part in decision-making affecting the national interest.

I am thinking, for example, of the debate on the Vietnam war; if, instead of being faced with of a unilateral decision, Parliament had been taken into the government's confidence, and if during out, we could openly discuss in this House the external relations of our country, the strategy that the government intends take, if the government could take the House in its confidence always evading the issue, then it could be said to be a parliamentary reform in depth which would go much further than simply requiring that members give notice of their questions or that our proceedings be televised.

There is another question on which the Prime Minister was evasive in an attempt to draw a red herring. He talked about repatriating the constitution. In his speech of October 3 that could be called his constitution repatriation speech, the Prime Minister said, as reported on page 46 of *Hansard*:

But I think it will be fairly easy to convince—

Oh, what paternalism! How things change when you have a majority!

the people in Quebec—

Now he is talking to the people in Quebec! He is going over the head of the Quebec premier, of the Quebec government. He is addressing himself directly to the citizens of Quebec. In a way, I can understand that he should bypass the premier of Quebec, but there are formalities one cannot do away with.

He goes on to say that:

—they no longer need to seek the help of Great Britain, that they no longer need to hide behind Great Britain's skirts when we discuss among ourselves political issues affecting us all.

● (1430)

It is our duty, Mr. Speaker, to be outspoken and let people know about Quebecers' deep feeling in this