

The Address—Mr. MacLean

short-term political gain but to long-term economic interests; to Canada's present and future. I believe history will confirm that this was prudent husbandry of our resources that will help generate the wealth with which we can attain the goals of our uniquely Canadian society. I believe it is a sound decision in the interests of that positive Canadian nationalism to which I believe this House and the people of Canada would universally subscribe.

Hon. J. A. MacLean (Malpeque): Mr. Speaker, at the outset I want to congratulate the mover and the seconder of the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne, those men who set this debate in motion. I listened with considerable interest to the minister who has just resumed his seat, in respect of the problems of energy and its uses in Canada. It is not my intention to reply to him or to say anything about the subject of the minister's speech. I do not intend to speak on economic matters, which is the customary thing in this debate. I realize that economic matters are vitally important as a prerequisite to the realization of what we might call the good life.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I wish to say as emphatically as I can that I do not believe affluence can in itself produce a satisfactory kind of life to which all Canadians would aspire. I therefore propose to direct my remarks for the most part to matters, other than economic ones, which I believe to be vitally important. If my few remarks were such that they would merit a descriptive title, I would probably call them "not by bread alone". I think this is an age in which we tend to judge everything too much in economic terms and evaluate everything by the yardstick of the dollar. I belong to that generation which grew up in the great depression and on maturity found itself confronted with the almost insurmountable task of overcoming the dual force of nazism and fascism.

● (4:20 p.m.)

Having accomplished that objective, our generation moved forward with enthusiasm toward a better life not only for themselves but for mankind generally. I think it was that feeling at the end of World War II that produced such efforts on the part of mankind as a determination to achieve world peace through the setting up of the United Nations organization. Then a secondary, or perhaps equally important goal of 20 or 25 years ago was the provision of equality of opportunity. By holding these views we were probably not sufficiently aware that we were ripe for exploitation.

In our effort to provide equality of opportunity we forgot that this could be debased by growing numbers of people who would interpret it as meaning that the world owed them a living. In an attempt to provide for the physical prerequisites of a good life we measured everything in materialistic terms and made economic matters almost a religion. In biblical terms, we became worshippers of the golden calf forgetting some of the other, most important aspects of life not only for the individual but for nations.

In that framework of thinking chiefly of material gain we were ripe for exploitation by the vendors of political

[Mr. Greene.]

snake-oil guaranteed to cure all political ills. Many Canadians—especially those in the cities—are, politically speaking, primitive and ripe to have their most valued possessions bartered away for slogans, ideals, states of society, new orders, just societies and in short all the tinsel and finery with which modern political charlatans charm their jewels from the modern political savage. As a result, often as Canadians we have exchanged things which were priceless for things which were merely expensive.

I believe we have forgotten there are things, including our very way of life, which are fragile and which must be carefully preserved. As Canadians we go along blindly on the assumption that we have some magical constitution that will protect us from bad government. Nothing could be further from the fact. Canadians, like any other people, will get governments only as good as the people who make up those governments and only as good as the ability of the people who elect them to determine good from bad.

Mr. Speaker, I am a Conservative. For this I make no apology. I believe the aim of politics, as of all else, is the good life. But the good life is something which cannot be comprehended in some phrase or formula about political or social order. Even if it could be so comprehended, it could not be brought about in the main by political means. I believe and contend that the most a politician can do is ensure that some, by no means all, of the most important conditions in which the good life can exist are present and, more important still, prevent fools or knaves setting up conditions which make an approach to the good life impossible. Many of the great evils of our time have come from men who mocked and exploited human misery by contending that government, according to their way of thinking, could offer Utopia. I find the motive force of human progress not in the compulsory authority of the state but in the individual's conscience and his sense of duty.

As a Conservative, strangely perhaps, I do not believe that the political struggle is the most important thing in life. In this I probably differ from Communists, Socialists, Nazis, and even Social Crediters or perhaps many Liberals. But to the great majority of Conservatives, religion, art, study, family, country, friends, music, fun, duty and all the joys and riches, of existence of which the poor know less than the rich are the indefeasible freeholders, are higher on the scale than their handmaiden, the political struggle—because the most the political struggle can achieve is an improved standard of living, and in trying to achieve it frequently we have traded for it other valuable things that are not measured in dollars.

As a result of this I believe we have taken for granted some of our most priceless values in life. We have failed, for example, to recognize that man has existed on the globe for millions of years and that only in a small fraction, the last 1 per cent, of his experience has there developed anything we might in the loosest terms call civilization. Yet we take for granted that our civilization is a permanent thing that will go on no matter how we mistreat it or with what carelessness we fail to inculcate it in the next generation.