

The Address—Mr. Allmand

● (1220)

The first item mentioned in the Speech from the Throne that we are led to believe is a bright new idea is the establishment of a parliamentary task force on the reform of the House of Commons. I participated with members of the Conservative Party who did a very good job in a special committee that examined parliamentary reform for more than one year. We examined every aspect of parliamentary reform and tabled 10 reports, only one of which has been acted upon on a temporary basis. Many of us hope that those temporary measures will become permanent. But that was just one of those reports. That committee has already dealt with such matters as how to make Members of Parliament play a more independent role in the House and how to make committees more effective. Since there are so many conservative members, it appears that starting over with a new task force is only a means to occupy the time of Government members in makework projects.

I was a member of that special committee on parliamentary reform last year and I will therefore be pressing very strongly that the new committee begin by implementing those reports to which the Conservative members gave their unanimous support. Three of those Conservative members on that committee, the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp), the Minister of State for the Canadian Wheat Board (Mr. Mayer) and the Government House Leader (Mr. Hnatyshyn), were on that committee. I suggest that the Government House Leader and our House Leader (Mr. Gray) should develop a way to implement those unanimous reports so that the whole process need not begin again.

Let us examine other proposals announced in the Speech from the Throne. The Government announced that it was in favour of official languages and official language minorities. While that is laudable, it was a former Liberal government that set up the royal commission on official languages and, against great opposition from some members of the Conservative Party at that time, passed the Official Languages Act. It has been trying to fine-tune it for some years now. We are pleased that the Conservative Party with its new Leader now stands behind official languages. When it appears in the Speech from the Throne, it is almost like motherhood.

The new Government also stated in the Speech from the Throne that it wants a constitutional agreement with Quebec. We all want that. The original constitutional proposals put forward to the House by former Prime Minister Trudeau included such things as a veto for Quebec, which it always had and wanted. But that proposal was torpedoed not only by the Péquiste government in Quebec but by many of the provincial Conservative governments in this country. As a result, I believe that we have a weaker constitutional document, unfortunately, without Quebec. If we determine who was responsible for that, it certainly was not the previous Liberal government under Prime Minister Trudeau.

The Government then says that it will honour the commitment to Canada's aboriginal peoples as contained in the Constitution Act of 1982. The only commitment contained in the Constitution Act, 1982 is to hold two more conferences.

Why does the Speech from the Throne not mention a commitment to Indian self-government? Such a commitment was recommended in the unanimous report of the special committee to the House to which Conservative members gave unanimous support. As a matter of fact, a present member of the House was co-chairman of that special committee on Indian self-government which gave that unanimous report. The new Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Crombie) has said that he favours Indian self-government and that this will be his goal. However, it was not mentioned at all in the Speech from the Throne.

The Government also stated that it believes in the legitimacy of the trade union movement. While we are pleased to hear that the Conservatives finally declared their belief in the legitimacy of the trade union movement and consultation with trade unions, it is simply another motherhood statement. The Throne Speech contains other such statements. It was a very bland and superficial document that did not tell us very much. It did not contain very much with which anybody could disagree.

However, it was the Thursday following the Throne Speech when we finally saw the true intentions of the Conservative Party. We finally saw the Tory colours being flown high and bright. The financial statement included a promise to cut expenditures by over \$4 billion through the elimination of some programs altogether and a substantial cut-back of others.

It is traditional that the Throne Speech outline the proposals of the Government for the upcoming session. The Throne Speech, except for one item, was rather vague and superficial in that respect. The real intentions of the Government were shown in the financial statement.

There were many proposals that were not mentioned in the Speech from the Throne. It is well known that we compiled a list of all the promises that were made by the Conservative Party during the election. It amounted to 338 promises for a total of \$4 billion. These promises were not all made on a national basis. Some were made in individual constituencies, like those made by the Conservative candidate in my constituency. Some promises were made to certain regions of the country in order to gain votes and cajole the people of those ridings. We saw very few steps to fulfil those promises in the Throne Speech. The issue of spouses' allowance is certainly one example. I approved of that policy. However, what happened to those 338 promises which amounted to \$4 billion? When will the Government fulfil those promises?

The Government has said that when it came to power it discovered that it would not be able to implement those promises because the cupboard was bare. The Government stated last week that it has discovered that the deficit will be approximately \$34 billion. During the election campaign the Prime Minister and his many candidates were saying that the situation was much worse and that the deficit would be \$36 billion. They campaigned for election on the basis that the country's finances were in an awful mess, that the deficit was worse than they admitted it to be the other night. Yet they made those 338 promises that were worth \$4 billion. That