

The Address—Mr. Fortin

duct, for the way they welcomed the Indians and for their contribution to national unity.

Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to congratulate you on the confidence you most certainly deserve from all your colleagues, our party included, for the heavy burden of presiding over our proceedings. The situations sometimes critical we have to live through in this House can only be solved by your tact, your competence and most of all your fairness. I want to assure you on behalf of my party of our co-operation at all times so that our proceedings can benefit the whole population we have the honour to represent.

Mr. Speaker, I would like at the outset of my remarks to congratulate the hon. members for Rimouski (Mr. Allard), Charlevoix (Mr. Caouette) and Drummond (Mr. Boisvert), three new colleagues we welcome to this House. All our colleagues have seen their eloquence and their sincerity when participating in the work of this House and their will to contribute to improve the lot of all citizens.

Mr. Speaker, I should like also to congratulate the movers of the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne (Messrs. Blais and Blaker), and to assure them of my admiration as it is not always easy to put forward more or less acceptable proposals.

Mr. Speaker, I was the most surprised man in the world on coming back to the House for a second term by the tone of the debate on the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

That Speech from the Throne is perhaps the least rational of all the ones I have known, but perhaps the most practical of all. What all that will come to, whether it will be translated into action or not, all that remains to be seen.

Mr. Speaker, all hopes are permitted. As a Social Credit member, I am happy to see not only that the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) is considering a guaranteed annual income for a group of citizens but that our ideas winning acceptance. Therefore it is not as stupid as the former Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Marchand) said it was during the election campaign. I realize now that things are changing, which gives us heart to keep on with our work.

But when I heard the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) and the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Government attacking one another to know who was the most in favour of national unity or the most against it, I was disappointed to say the least.

When we listen to the speeches of the members from the Maritime provinces, what do we hear? If they are from the Progressive Conservative party, we may be sure they will criticize but if they are on the government side, they say all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

But to be honest, let's forget about the rhetoric and realize that they are saying: "If things are not going well in New Brunswick, it is on account of poverty, lack of employment, misery in the midst of abundance and a surplus of potatoes".

I see this moves the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe (Mr. Wagner) to laughter because when he went there to collect votes they were raising potatoes. Nevertheless

[Mr. Dupras.]

people in the Maritimes say that if things are going badly it is because they have a surplus of products, for which they find no buyers and that therefore the federal government is to blame and even perhaps the people in Quebec, perhaps even also Westerners who are getting too much.

When you hear Opposition members who come from the west, since one can no longer speak of Liberal members from the west, you get another version. They speak the same language as the others, English. Things are going badly for them because they have a wheat surplus and the government is to blame for that surplus, because it failed to make enough sales and its distribution machinery is inadequate.

This afternoon I heard a highly eloquent Progressive Conservative Party colleague repeating the same old tune he has been singing since he has been here, Mr. Speaker, saying that everything the Liberals sold was bad and that the only good wheat is the one the Progressive Conservatives have sold. Yet, if things are going badly in the Prairies it is because there is a surplus of wheat.

On the other hand, when I come to Quebec I see that for Quebec farmers also things are going badly, not in English but in French. They are going badly because of a surplus of milk, of butter, of cheese and there is a shortage of feed grain from the west because it is too expensive.

Then there is the problem of potatoes and the problem of eggs in Ontario.

In other words, Mr. Speaker, the economy of Canada, protected by the Grits and Tories over the past 100 years, has contributed to the division of our country to the extent that today you would swear we have Upper Canada on one side of the House and Lower Canada on the other, as a result of the October 30 election.

• (2100)

Mr. Speaker, I am really disappointed at seeing that the basic problem does not lie with language but rather with the economic situation and that most hon. members are accusing one another on the plea of language difficulties and because of French power while forgetting the economic problems which our people have to face.

I believe that this statement may cause a number of hon. members to laugh, but I shall remind them that in the constituency of Lotbinière we are faced with a problem which is the same in almost every riding. Personal initiative as well as work is not encouraged in Canada, and I call on my colleagues' good conscience to make the following reasoning. For the older person who is entitled to the old age security pension at the age of 65, we wish to bring the eligibility age down to 60. The act states that the older person is entitled to the same basic amount at the age of 65 and that if his income is not sufficient the government grants him a guaranteed supplement which will reach the incredible maximum of \$150 a month. If this older person wants to help school boys cross the road, works for the school board and gets a certain income, what does happen? This older person must declare such income and therefore his guaranteed income supplement is reduced. Each dollar earned by this person means \$1 less in supplement. Such is the principle of present rules and governments. They stifle a man's initiative and seem