

The Address—Mr. Gray

Mr. H. E. Gray (Essex West): Mr. Speaker, my first words in this debate will be to echo most heartily the congratulations already tendered by so many of my colleagues to those who moved and seconded the motion for an address in reply to the speech from the throne. I feel they did an outstanding job. I wish I could say as much, Mr. Speaker, for the attempts by the hon. member for Victoria-Carleton (Mr. Flemming) to criticize the Canada pension plan.

Mr. Flemming (Victoria-Carleton): No one expects you to, so there is no disappointment there.

Mr. Gray: The only people who will be disappointed are those who thought they would have some meaningful criticism of that plan from the hon. member. One of the most unusual criticisms of this plan which could be advanced in this house is that it is not portable, especially since it should be obvious to all hon. members that the pension will be paid out of a central fund with cheques available to people right across the country, in the same way that the present old age security cheques are paid and in the same way that the family allowance cheques are paid.

Mr. Flemming (Victoria-Carleton): You will not find the word "portable" in the speech from the throne.

Mr. Gray: I did not interrupt the hon. member and I think I should be accorded the same courtesy, applying the principle established by that capable and experienced parliamentarian, his own leader.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I say that the only incomprehensible criticism which could be attached to this plan is the criticism advanced against it by the hon. member for Victoria-Carleton. Surely the word "portable" does not need to be attached to a reference in the speech from the throne to a plan which obviously has national scope. I might point out that, experienced though the hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka (Mr. Aiken) may be, his own reference through some manipulation of figures which showed that only 20 per cent of the population would be covered by the plan does not by a long shot constitute any incontestable proof of this particular assertion.

I would also point out that when the hon. member for Victoria-Carleton makes reference to the need for a spread between the size of rural and urban ridings, I think we have to keep in mind that shopping centres do not vote, that riding boundaries do not vote, that trees and rocks do not vote, but that people do. I do not think there is a person in Canada who can say at this time

that there is any reason why a person living in an urban area should not have exactly the same degree of representation as one living in a rural area; and I am sure that the legislation to be introduced will cover this point. However, I was pleased to note that the hon. member for Victoria-Carleton echoed the splendid affirmation of Canada which was made by the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) in his contribution to this debate. It was a speech which I am sure will be considered by history as one of the great moments in parliament in modern times.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, we of the Liberal party understand the situation and we believe in Canada. We believe in a country where all citizens, regardless of their country of origin, have the same opportunity of participating fully in the life of their country.

[*Text*]

The speech from the throne makes reference to changes in transportation policy. Last Tuesday the hon. member for Kent (Ont.) (Mr. Danforth) dealt with this matter when he spoke of the discriminatory freight rates structure which has been hampering the economic development of southwestern Ontario. I must say that he deserves some credit for bringing this matter before the house again, even though in doing so he was at most repeating, and perhaps echoing in a somewhat expanded form, points which I raised in this house on December 3, 1962. At that time I had the honour of bringing this problem to the attention of the previous Conservative government during debate on the Freight Rates Reduction Act; but I must say that the government of that day showed no inclination to do anything about the matter or that they even understood it.

The hon. member for Ontario (Mr. Starr), then minister of labour, about the same time told a delegation of mayors and reeves from the Windsor area that if they wanted these freight rates changed the only thing to be done was to go to the board of transport commissioners; and when my colleague the hon. member for Essex East (Mr. Martin) looked into the matter he was told that the board did not have jurisdiction at that time to make the type of changes which were needed but that they had to come through legislation. So I am happy to see the hon. member for Kent (Ont.) now calling for legislation to correct the freight rates problem, and I hope he has convinced his own party, including the hon. member for Ontario, that this is the way to go about it.

I could not criticize the hon. member for Kent (Ont.) too severely for not being aware