

The Address—Mr. de Jong

ic unemployment and economic hard times for many Canadians.

Our older people are the ones who worked hard to build this country. Today they are expected to live on meagre incomes. I would like to quote from a piece distributed by the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women which was just recently released.

Three out of four single, widowed or divorced women over 70 had an annual income of under \$5,000 in 1977. Even with the government old age pension three out of five single, widowed or divorced women over 65 live in poverty. Company pensions do not help many women. Four out of five single, divorced or widowed women over 65 receive no income from private pension schemes. This is how we treat old people in Canada when we have all the resources we have! This country owes much to its old people. Many young people have little hope of permanent and meaningful employment.

There is talk of oil shortages. Interest rates are soaring. As a nation we face a mammoth debt load. What is wrong? Why should a country as rich as ours not be able to do better for its retired people, workers, farmers and the young? Why? Because successive Liberal and Conservative governments have followed policies which gave away our resources and our heritage. It just boggles my mind. Many of our resources are gone, our environment is polluted and all we have to show for this is a mammoth foreign debt. Foreign companies have taken our resources and left us with debt. Every month millions of dollars leave the country in the form of profits and dividends. This widens our balance of payments deficit and creates many of the financial problems we face.

In Saskatchewan the government went out and borrowed money and used it to acquire a majority interest in the potash industry. Now the profits from that resource will stay in the country and contribute to rather than drain our financial resources.

There is no doubt that many Canadians are going to face a tough winter. Higher interest rates and oil prices will increase the cost of food, clothing, housing and other necessities of life. They will slow down activities and create further unemployment. The only solution the previous Liberal government and now this government seem to have is to attack the victims of the economic system. Cutbacks in unemployment insurance, cutbacks in job creation and cutbacks in low-cost housing and other social programs are the only solutions Liberal and Conservative governments have been bringing before this House.

What is needed is economic planning. We need an economic blueprint. We have to get control over the economic forces so that they benefit Canadians rather than exploit them. We need an economic blueprint which will provide stable prices, full employment, affordable housing, medical care and other social programs. Instead, we have a government determined to recreate a myth, the myth of free enterprise. Imagine, in our day and age when prices are not set by a free, competitive market but by a few international monopolies, we have a government which does not believe government should actively participate

in the economic system on behalf of Canadians. This government is hell-bent on turning back the clock. It is destroying the few tools we have to protect ourselves from the manipulation and exploitation of multinationals.

When I read the task force report on Petro-Canada, I was amazed at the philosophy expressed. Somehow they seem to feel that we cannot run a successful public enterprise and still carry out social and national priorities. It is as though national and social priorities are incompatible with running a sound business. The people of Saskatchewan know that this is not so. They stand in total disbelief at the actions of this government.

In Saskatchewan we have a public transportation company. Our population is sparse and spread widely across the province. Many small towns and villages are served by this bus system. The profits from the main routes, those busy routes between cities, go to provide services to those routes which are not profitable. What this government is planning to do with Petro-Canada would be the same as if the Saskatchewan government gave the profitable parts of the bus company away and then began to pay for the unprofitable parts out of general revenue. No government in Saskatchewan would last five minutes if it tried something like that. It would be hooted and jeered out of office. Saskatchewan Conservative members of this House should know this. I am sure they do, and I am sure they know that their action will hurt them in the next election.

Saskatchewan people are quickly learning that this is not a progressive government. They realize that this government is controlled by the Bay Street boys.

What would happen if we sold off the profitable parts of our bus company? The unprofitable routes would have to be financed out of general revenue. There would be pressure to cut services, costs and taxes, and eventually the towns and villages would lose their bus service. That is the effect of this kind of thinking.

This government seems to have hang-ups about public enterprise; it does not think it can work. Well, if Petro-Canada must be taken out of government control, then I have a suggestion, a western suggestion. Make it a co-op, a national consumer-owned energy co-op. Give every Canadian a voting share. This would ensure that Petro-Canada would remain wholly Canadian-owned. It would also ensure that Petro-Canada would serve the interests of Canadians rather than exploiting them. It would ensure that Petro-Canada is democratically controlled.

If the recommendations of the task force on Petro-Canada are implemented, 100 people could end up owning and controlling Petro-Canada. It would eventually be taken over by oil companies and their corporate friends. Making Petro-Canada a consumer-owned co-op would guarantee that this could never happen. Who knows, five years down the road this co-op might operate a nationwide chain of service stations, explore and drill for oil and develop and market solar cells. Let the people make the decisions. Make Petro-Canada a co-op. I challenge the government to do some original thinking.