

one of my ambitions as a member of this party is to be mindful of the future, but I would suggest to him that that is the golden objective of 113 Liberals. The definition of being a Liberal is to be concerned with the future.

We are not worried about how our own leader is concerned about the future but about how the leader of the government is concerned about the future. That is our concern. I would only remind the Prime Minister of the scripture that can be borrowed from the Book of Job. Being one of the few Liberals from western Canada I would remind him of the story of the messenger who came to report to Job that his cattle were stolen and his barns were burned and who said that he alone had escaped to bring the terrible news. I am one of those who escaped to tell the Prime Minister the terrible news.

● (1440)

May I begin by recounting a story that was fairly common in the Manitoba legislature. One of the legends that was handed down through a succession of premiers told of a defeated premier who handed his successor three envelopes, saying that he had kept the envelopes on hand for such a contingency. He told the new premier to use the envelopes very carefully at times when his government found itself in real trouble. It was not very long until that happened. When the new premier opened the first envelope it contained one simple message: "Blame the previous government." Mr. Speaker, this government is obviously in serious trouble already because it has already followed that advice.

It was not too long before that government got into trouble again. The premier opened the second envelope and found the message: "Blame the other levels of government." That seemed to be good advice and he followed it. I suggest that the new government opposite is very close to doing the same as it tries to work out an agreement on oil prices. I think we can expect to see the first minister of this land saying, within a week or two, "It is the fault of those other fellows."

It was not too long before the government in the story found itself in trouble a third time. The new premier opened the third envelope. The message was again very simple; it read: "Start preparing three envelopes." I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that this government is very close to the necessity of preparing that third envelope for itself.

I had intended to follow the tradition followed by the mover and seconder of the Speech from the Throne debate of describing to members some of the glories and virtues of my constituency. That would be especially appropriate at this time as Winnipeg has become a favourite place to hold meetings. I am afraid that if I were to begin to describe the conditions in the province of Manitoba and my constituency, however, hon. members opposite would find the discussion a little sobering, and I would not want to depress them or shake them from their present state of euphoria.

For the last few years Manitoba has been suffering a very strange and debilitating malady called "conservative government"; in fact, some people have called it a severe case of cirrhosis of the government organ brought about by an

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extreme case of conservatism. Others have called it "Lyon's fanatic syndrome". The symptoms are very clear—economic anemia, stunted growth, impairment of the faculty to listen, political constipation and a lack of the will to move, to make decisions or to lead. For those who may be more clinically minded the statistics tell the story.

Since the Conservatives took over in Manitoba the province has had the lowest growth rate of any in Canada. It has lost more people in out-migration than at any time in the last 13 years. It is the only province in the country with an absolute decline in population. There has been a constant decrease in the amount of health and social services available to the poor and the elderly. This is all done in the name of this new religion that is seizing the land—this new religion called privatization, or restraint, or restructuring, or neo-conservatism—call it what you may. I had hoped that once the election was over we could quarantine that disease within the province of Manitoba. I thought that the Conservatives wanted to experiment and might damage a few provinces, but surely would not try to do that to the whole country.

During the summer there were some signs that certain ministers began to pick up that same strange fever that was all too common in Manitoba. I thought that the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Stevens) had probably taken a side trip to New York and had seen the Broadway show called "Sweeney Todd" and, being very current and fashionable, had applied to himself the title of "Mad Slasher of Wellington Street". I thought this might be part of the new philosophy and new theology that we have to apply, though I felt that those erstwhile characters called "Red Tories" would prevail and be able to restrain their more exuberant right-wing colleagues. In this I was wrong, for the throne speech shows very clearly who won the day in the Conservative caucus. It is not the Progressive Conservatives; it is the regression conservatives who are running the show with this government.

This suggests a basic unwillingness to look at the issues of inequality and social injustice in this country and an equal distrust of government as a positive, effective force to right those kinds of wrongs. It is all right for them to fool around with that particular, curious malady in the provincial context, but when they begin to prescribe those same medicines on a national scale the implications become far more serious.

As I read the throne speech and listen to hon. members opposite speak on it, I am reminded of a line from the play "The Rainmaker" which dealt with the evangelical preacher who was so busy preaching what was right that he forgot what was good. That is the problem with the Conservatives in this country, Mr. Speaker; they are so busy preaching what is right that they forget what is good.

I was particularly struck by the line in the Speech from the Throne which said that we can have unity in diversity. That may be true, but I would ask the government if you can have unity in depression. Can you have unity in disparity? Can you have unity in divisiveness, because that is what the tone and content of the Speech from the Throne indicates?