

And as I re-read this vague and innocuous Speech from the Throne yesterday, certain questions arose in my mind, such as: Why has the government only now come to the realization that perhaps much of what it is involved in could be better done by private enterprise?

Why has it only now come to the realization that the private sector, especially small and medium-sized business, is the backbone of our economy?

What sort of programs will provide more job opportunities, and will these provide what the government calls "worthwhile work," or will they provide the sort of "busy work" that characterized the Opportunities for Youth Program and many of the undertakings that have come under the Local Initiatives Program?

The government plans to merge the UIC with the Department of Manpower and Immigration. Why were they ever separated in the first place? And this, probably the most secretive government in our history, is going to open up and allow greater citizen access to information as to what the government is doing and what it knows about its citizens! I will have to see this to believe it.

And what, pray tell, is meant by, and I quote: "... the Government will place a very high priority upon... the achievement of formal constitutional independence"? It is all so vague, all so uninspired. It is the program of an administration that is reeling from the pummelling it has received at the hands of public opinion polls.

The government does not know where it is going. It is casting about looking in vain for public support from people who are completely disenchanted. It is seeking to be all things to all people, which is typical of a Liberal government, and is making all sorts of compromises and humiliating "about-faces"—anything to regain popularity. What it so sadly does not seem to realize is that the Canadian people have had enough of this very attitude. Canadians are fed up with a government that says: "We have a very clear-cut set of principles in which we firmly believe; but, if you do not like those, we have plenty of others."

Surely this attitude must have influenced such men as Jean Marchand, James Richardson, and John Turner in arriving at their respective decisions to leave the cabinet. They saw the mess, the confusion, and the intellectual dishonesty. And such must also have been the case for the 26 other ministers who have quit, been fired, or been defeated since Mr. Trudeau took over leadership of the Liberal Party in 1968. I doubt that any Prime Minister ever had a similar eight-year record.

There is obvious dissension and confusion in the government. There is manifest disenchantment with the Prime Minister, even among his own lieutenants. While they bicker amongst themselves, we are left to flounder about in the morass and chaos they have created for us.

Some government this is!

[Translation]

Before concluding, I would like to say a word about the Senate. After sitting here for 14 years, I note that the Senate

has certainly gained in prestige. There is a lot of respect for the Senate in several circles, but I would say even more for its committees. The good work accomplished in our committees undoubtedly improved the reputation of this house.

During the last session our committees did excellent work in sometimes very complex and very difficult subjects. The chairmen of these various committees did not spare their efforts and time and they certainly deserve the warmest congratulations and the gratitude of all members of this house.

However, I deplore that the debates in the Senate itself are not always as vigorous and objective as the deliberations of our committees. That may be due to an overly great majority in favour of the administration. It would undoubtedly be very difficult for a great number of Liberal senators to boast about the accomplishments of the government but they prefer to abstain.

As to the opposition, it will continue to do much more considerable work than the proportion of its representation would warrant. However, I hope that the internal opposition in the majority will continue to second the efforts of the opposition to keep the government on its toes. That internal opposition played a useful role in certain circumstances even if sometimes it capitulated before promises or under pressure from certain ministers.

[English]

I would like to see more government legislation initiated in the Senate, allowing honourable senators first crack at it, especially legislation of a specialized or technical nature, as we have the expertise to deal with such matters. I think it is only fair that we should give the other place greater opportunity to plagiarize us.

● (1440)

Now, about the last session: the length of it prompts me to wonder whether the government intends to do away with the practice of having one session every year. It is intimated in the BNA Act—not said, but intimated—that we should have one session per year.

Does the government no longer see the need for the yearly interruption of the work of Parliament by way of a prorogation? Does the government no longer see the need of having a Throne Speech every year? And is that because this government has made Throne Speeches generally quite meaningless and not at all indicative, in practical terms, of what legislative program will be submitted to Parliament? Does the government want long sessions so it can avoid having to introduce anew controversial bills which meet with prolonged resistance in the house? The government should let us know what its intentions are in this respect. If the last session indicates a new trend, then certain practical adjustments should be made in the operations of both houses and a relatively fixed calendar should be adopted.

Honourable senators, the official opposition stands ready, as I said, to do more than its share of the work awaiting the Senate in this session. It will do its best with the legislation introduced, but it can in no way alter the main difficulty