The Address—Mr. Irénée Pelletier

neither from progress nor from science; on the contrary, properly used, they could resolve many of the great problems which beset mankind. The real peril is in man who has at hand ever more powerful instruments, suited as much to destruction as to the highest conquests.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, there are also poor people in Canada. There are poor people in each and every wealthy country. As a matter of fact, this may sound somewhat paradoxical, but no nation in the world, however developed it may be, has yet succeeded in eliminating the problem of poverty.

The task that the Canadian government undertook, namely to reduce poverty as much as possible, is an extremely difficult one. In 1966, President Johnson undertook to fight poverty and had a special budget prepared with a view to eliminating it within ten years. Those ten years are almost over and the fate of the poor, according to a recent survey, shows that their position is worse than before.

Economist Leon Keyserling, with whom John Kenneth Galbraith and Sargent Schriver had established the famous Freedom Budget in 1966, said recently, and I quote:

[*English*]

Manifestly, poverty is not a problem of economic costs.

Here in the United States, it is a problem of not having the political and the social and the moral will to place poverty high on the priority list—

[*Translation*]

And a little further, the economist said, and I quote:

[*English*]

Here in this country, where there can be no economic, nor technological excuse for it, poverty is not only a private tragedy but in a sense a public crime. It is above all a challenge to our morality. Materially as well as spiritually, a society afflicted by poverty deprives all of its citizens of security and well-being.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, the wealthiest country in the world, spending huge amounts, did not succeed in eliminating poverty. If rich countries endeavour to solve at home the problem of poverty, obviously governments must make increased efforts in order to close as much as possible the gap between the rich and the poor.

It has to be noted that Canada acts as a pioneer in this field. Canada is the only country in the world that set up a department whose primary objective is to alleviate as much as possible the disparities that exist between the richer and the poorer regions.

One must also emphasize the fact that Canada is the only country that has, in the past few years, substantially increased and continuously readjusted pensions, allowances and income supplements paid to the most disadvantaged people in the society, that is to say large families, older people, war veterans, etc.

If one of the great principles that has guided the government has been a fairer distribution among the various areas of our country, it is only normal that this should be reflected at the individual level by better living conditions. Incidentally, it should be pointed out that some tax cuts were granted for the benefit of low income families and individuals.

Mr. Speaker, I have the clear impression that we are at a turning point in our history and that every Canadian must

[Mr. Pelletier (Sherbrooke).]

realize that the elimination of poverty is one of the worthiest and noblest objectives of any government.

The speech from the throne that will be before us in the next days is well in line with the position of the Canadian government: to eliminate practically all poverty in our country.

The Speech from the Throne announces measures directed at aiding producers and consumers alike, at providing for special assistance to small businesses, at ensuring further processing of raw materials in this country. Greater emphasis will be laid on regional economic expansion and on upgrading the quality of life in urban centres. Measures will be introduced for increasing expenses in the research, industrial progress and technical innovation fields. There are, of course, assistance programs for the farmers; all in all, the aim is to achieve a better distribution of our resources. All these, Mr. Speaker, are concrete measures which reflect the effort of this government to reduce the gap between developed and less developed areas of our country, between the wealthy and the poor.

The time has come for all Canadians, without exception, to do whatever they can to suppress poverty. It is high time, Mr. Speaker, besides, of course, the measures that may be introduced by the federal and provincial governments, that the wealthy people in Toronto help those less fortunate in Moncton. That people in Vancouver help people in Saskatoon. That people in Halifax help people in Rimouski and that people in Montreal help people in Prince Edward Island.

[*English*]

In his inaugural address, President Kennedy said:

If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.

[*Translation*]

Nature has not distributed its riches evenly in all areas of the world and yesterday's rich could be tomorrow's poor.

There was a time in the history of Canada when New Brunswick was the most prosperous province. There was also a time in the history of our country when Quebec was considered the most progressive area. Yesterday, it was Ontario, today it is Alberta and British Columbia. Tomorrow, perhaps it will be Newfoundland, Yukon and the Northwest Territories.

For more than a century, England has dominated the world on the commercial, economic and financial levels. Such was the case in other periods for France, Spain and Russia.

Two world slaughters which cost humanity 50 million human lives, some minor monetary crisis, a minor energy crisis were sufficient to make powers of yesterday experience enormous difficulties from which they may not be able to get out without the help of their friends and their neighbours.

If, on the international level, we want to reduce disparities between rich and poor by further sharing the riches of the earth, the same principle will obviously apply first to every country.

Technology enables us to believe that within a few decades sea resources will perhaps constitute the most