western world have generally abandoned their obligations to the elderly, to the ill and to people on low incomes. Only two countries, Mr. Speaker, in the last three years have not yielded to the temptation of socking it to the less fortunate economically. Only Sweden and this country have not done this. Every other country, including Britain and the United States—those two great examples which the Tory Party hold up—have socked it to the poor. They have cut back on aid to the elderly. They have reduced their financial commitment to the low income groups and to the ill.

Canada, I am proud to say together with Sweden, are the only two countries which have withstood the considerable pressure from rightest philosophies, from small "c" conservatives who believe, and practise around the world, that we ought to ask the poor to pay for times of economic difficulty. This Government does not believe that. We do not believe that as a whole in this country. That is one of the shocks the Tories are in for.

The rhetoric of that Party is great. It must feel important to be in the company of Tories like Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. However, I say to Hon. Members who mouth that rhetoric that they are not in the company of the average Canadian when they do that. The average Canadian believes in and supports the social safety net which this Government and its predecessor Liberal Governments have built over the years and have stood by even in times of economic recession such as we have been through in the past few years. We have maintained that social safety net. In my view, that is a solid achievement of the last two or three years in particular. As I have said, the temptation to do otherwise was very great.

• (1230)

We have also continued to protect and extend the rights of Canadians. We have reduced inflation, there can be no argument about that. We have begun to develop a competitive industrial base. We have maintained the social safety net. We have continued to protect and extend the rights of Canadians. Those are four significant areas of solid achievement. The Throne Speech proposes to build on those solid achievements and others, to build on the gains we have made in those important areas, and it is fairly specific as to how the Government proposes to do that.

I realize, Mr. Speaker, that my approach to this subject is considerably different from that of the gentleman who preceded me in debate, the Hon. Member for Moose Jaw (Mr. Neil). In fairness to both of us, we approach our assignment of getting ready for this debate from opposite ends. He, being in opposition and, more importantly, being a Tory, has to sit down with the document and say: "What is wrong with this? Where are the loopholes? What nasty and negative things can I say about this? How can I put the worst possible light on this?" That is the frame of mind in which he approaches his preparation for the debate.

It should be no secret to anyone in the House, Mr. Speaker, that I approach it from a very different vantage point. I support the Government which prepared the speech. I support the programs the Government has been pursuing with considerable success. Therefore, I can find in the Throne Speech a number of very positive initiatives to help us as a government and as a country build on the very sure foundation we have laid.

For example, Mr. Speaker, I find the Throne Speech proposes giving even greater protection to home owners. That is a positive initiative. The Tory speaker did not mention it, but then that would undermine his thesis that there was nothing good in the Throne Speech. Is he, along with his colleagues, telling us and the people of Canada that giving greater protection to home owners is insignificant? There are many hundreds of thousands of home owners out there who will not agree with him. Therefore, over his opposition we are going to go on giving that increased protection to home owners because they deserve it and we have an obligation to help provide it.

As the Throne Speech says, we intend to enhance the flexibility of the mortgage market, again in the interests of helping the home owner. We intend to go forward with our proposals in the Canada Health Act. Is that, in the words of the gentleman from Moose Jaw, another nothing? Does he dismiss that as being of no consequence to the people of Canada? Is that what he meant when he said he could find nothing in the Speech that filled him with optimism? Is he not optimistic that the Government has the courage to ensure that people will continue to have adequate health protection? Is that what he meant when he said there was nothing to be optimistic about? I can be very optimistic that we have a Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin) and a Government which have taken the initiative in this legislation. It is a good, positive initiative. It is an optimistic piece of legislation.

In fairness to him, Mr. Speaker, I suppose what the Hon. Member for Moose Jaw means is that as a Tory he cannot be very optimistic if the Government is addressing some of the real issues. As we address the real issues, both he and his Party have less cause for optimism. You see, Mr. Speaker, the scenario they must adopt, the prayer they must continually make, is that everything will go wrong.

Well, that prayer is not going to be answered. In this Throne Speech we have protection for the home owner and the elderly. We have proposals for youth, for the native people. We have proposals for the various regions of this country. We have proposals to address agricultural and fisheries problems. I realize that would not make a Tory very optimistic, but I understand the spirit in which he said that. It makes me as a Liberal very optimistic because, for me, it means my Party and my Government are doing some of the things that need to be done in this country.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, we have made a continuing commitment to reduce inflation even further than we have. That is something to be optimistic about. We have taken steps to strengthen both the public and private pension plans. That is something to be optimistic about. We have recognized in this Throne Speech the particular plight of youth in this country and their difficulty in finding jobs. It is this emphasis on youth