

*The Address—Mr. Lang*

We have, of course, introduced a treasury contribution through the form of two-price wheat payments to farmers. The federal government has been willing to assist in the movement of grain by providing 2,000 hopper cars, about half of which are now on stream and available for use. We have witnessed important studies on the handling and transportation system, and here lies one of the real challenges ahead of us in the grain industry. In the very near future we must reach a conclusion on what changes should be made in the handling and transportation system, and I hope that the Canada Grains Council which is taking on this task will proceed with speed so that we can make changes, in co-operation with producers, farmers organizations and provincial governments, which are in the best interests of the grain industry.

We look forward to testing the will of farmers directly on the best ways of marketing rapeseed, rye and flax and we will be prepared to do what is their wish in this regard. We will also be continuing work on an international market insurance scheme, a stabilization program which is so needed because of the way in which the grain marketing opportunities in the world can fluctuate up and down.

The Speech from the Throne contains some exciting words for western Canadians in the proposal that a conference be held specifically to deal with the economic and other objectives of western Canada. The west has had an interesting history of opposition to much of what governments have done. Its Members of Parliament, especially from the prairie region, have more frequently been on the opposition side of the House than in government. I must say that this was hardly changed when the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) was prime minister of this country because while he and many of his colleagues from the Prairies sat on the treasury benches, he sounded for all the world like a leader of the opposition in most of what he said and did about this country and who was controlling it.

What we now have is an opportunity to look at the aspirations of the west, of a region which has perhaps different needs from those where the greatest portion of the population is located. This conference provides us with the opportunity. It has taken a number of years to mature. I would like to pay tribute to the work of such persons as Dave Steuart, the Liberal leader in Saskatchewan, for his continuing work to bring together those who can and should be working on western objectives in total. We must come to some conclusion about our objectives, and here I think about objectives that favour growth for that region, even if the time has come when in some regions growth is no longer considered to be a significant or important matter.

• (1720)

In the Prairies and western Canada it is important to attempt to sustain and maintain our population and our activity. We have a very large infrastructure, a very large basic cost of operating our governments and our enterprises, and an increasing population can be a great advantage to us in this regard. Ways and means of developing the economy, the basic industries and the secondary industries that can logically flow from them, must be examined with this kind of objective in mind.

[Mr. Lang.]

What we learn in the development of policies for western Canada will, I am sure hon. members appreciate, have full significance for other regions of the country because we do not have such different needs from the people who live in the eastern portion of our country, the eastern portion of the province of Quebec, the northern portion of Quebec and Ontario and the north of this country as a whole. What we learn as we develop programs to reach our objectives will carry over and have implications for the whole of this country.

The Speech from the Throne referred to several steps which may be necessary to accomplish our objectives: the decentralization of the Department of Regional Economic Expansion and the concentration of its endeavours with other federal departments and provincial activities in the joint production of the techniques for accomplishing our objectives. We have gone far too long without this kind of concerted approach, with one federal policy moving in one direction and another provincial policy moving in a different direction. We have, therefore, not derived the best results from our efforts even when our objectives have been the same.

We will examine the tremendous and difficult question of transportation and freight rates. Members from all parts of the country will recognize the significance of this question, and of possible solutions, to their regions. Here we are looking at the need to examine transportation and freight rates questions in conjunction with a national policy as an instrument which has its effect upon the total development of this country. The west came into being in the heyday and following upon the acceptance in Canada of the national policy which depended upon the tariff structure and upon a railroad being built with government assistance from grants of land and other things. It was built on a theory of establishing a market for the central portion of the country. It is this fundamental policy which must be reviewed and which the Speech from the Throne now gives us an opportunity to do.

Mr. Speaker, the move toward a better society must take place not only in the economic sense but in the broad social sphere of the relation between person and person and persons and state. In the past, this government and its predecessor have been most active in areas which touch directly upon my jurisdiction in the Department of Justice in trying to move toward a society where equal opportunity and equal respect for rights was a reality as well as a theory. We have just recently begun the signing of agreements on legal aid and compensation for victims of crime, in another effort. This will ensure that throughout this country a right, in reality, exists for individuals who may be faced with criminal prosecution or who are the victims of criminal acts.

I consider these agreements to be important, not so much for sharing the cost of the burden in those provinces which already have moved into these fields but in the possibility they offer for the extension of legal aid in criminal matters to provinces which have not previously provided that service in a very extensive way. It is of fundamental importance that every individual be treated fairly in our courts; it is of fundamental importance to the respect for law and order in our society that this be so.