

The Address—Mr. La Salle

Canadians will benefit from a government that will surely feel hard-pressed by the opposition, and I trust that the opposition in turn will endeavour to force the government to come up with some long overdue legislation.

Such is the state of mind in which we must work in this House.

I was listening to the leader of the Progressive Conservative party (Mr. Stanfield) speak of restoring the confidence of the Canadians. Is it possible? Only to the extent where we act as administrators, and not by applying ourselves to embarrassing the government and forgetting our prime responsibility as Members of Parliament. He also added that the government should assume its responsibilities. No statement could surpass this one, I feel; and I share the opinions of the leader of the Progressive Conservative party when he speaks in that fashion. Exactly what is the responsibility of a Member of Parliament? Does it depend on the fact that he is part of a group? Is it because he is of the opposition that he should oppose the government rightly or wrongly? Should he not instead, as elected member, behave as an administrator who respects the commitments made during the election campaign?

Personally, Mr. Speaker, since as far back as in 1968 I have felt that it was my duty to serve the interests of society way before those of my party.

No doubt that the system under its present form is causing us difficulties.

I have resisted the temptation to become too easily part of that system and of course I had to choose a course which will not be an easy one. But the people trusted me any way because I think I have met their expectations by telling parliament of my constituency's needs and by supporting unceasingly legislation which I felt would benefit society, and that, to my mind, is the responsibility of a Member of Parliament.

There is no doubt that all political parties are fascinated by power. It is easy to say to the government: You did not get the trust of the majority, so you must give up the reins of power. But it is too easily forgotten that those calling for such a move failed also to gain a majority. The new parliament is inviting us, I think, to discuss mutual problems and to support measures which seem to be the most favourable.

I think that the composition of this new parliament enables the opposition members to get together and force the government to do something, should it refuse to do it.

True, there is also a Speech from the Throne which offers, only on paper of course, a lot of things. I think that the role of each member is to bring the government to implement this program as soon as possible. In my opinion, such are the responsibilities of each hon. member. Unhappily, by habit or ambition, they will try to bring down the government and forget the major interests of our people.

During the last election campaign, my motto was: "Man first", and I believe that this motto was relevant.

In my view, every hon. member should think first of the interests of the people before those of a political party, without being concerned about whether the government will be led by the grits or the tories. I do not think that the

[Mr. La Salle.]

Canadian people want their members to bring about a new election, but they certainly want the government to pass legislation that will benefit the country.

In the Speech from the Throne, many measures are mentioned and nothing can stop the opposition parties from forcing the government to improve present legislation and to introduce new legislation.

In my opinion, this is the real responsibility of each hon. member as well as of each political party. In fact, it would be dangerous if the only aim of a political party was to bring down the government. What the population needs is a Parliament working to safeguard the interests of the community.

Mr. Speaker, I was very happy to hear the new Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Jamieson) state that it was not up to us to determine the priorities of the provinces and that he was making it his business to ensure that there would be major consultations with the provinces. This was in fact reflected in the Speech from the Throne and it is something quite new for the Speech from the Throne to give such importance to the provinces in the establishment of new legislation or new arrangements, fiscal or otherwise.

I am personally pleased to see that the government has decided to consult the provinces more than it ever did. This is good for the provinces and it gives an opportunity to establish a more decentralized federalism, which our federal governments have been looking forward to for a very long time. The Speech from the Throne meets the aspirations of a good number of provinces. I think we should believe as members of Parliament in the decentralization of power and in consultation with the provinces.

• (1430)

Much has been said about the outcome of the election, but the general agreement is, I think, that the major problem still is of an economic nature with all Canadians being affected. In spite of its financial incentives and other measures, the government has not even succeeded in checking unemployment, the rate of which has doubled between June 1968 and October 1972.

The measures taken were therefore inadequate. Now this economic problem troubles each and every Canadian. However, I would like to remind you that the province of Quebec, which I have always defended in this House, besides this economic problem is faced with a constitutional one.

An hon. Member: A Conservative problem!

Mr. La Salle: It is important, I think, that this federal government, as well as all the members, realize that the handing over of certain powers to Quebec is a must, and furthermore that the province wants it badly.

The major problem in Canada is the economic situation: but the second one especially where Quebec is concerned, is no doubt the recovery of some powers by the provinces, taking into account the special situation in which the people of Quebec find themselves. I feel that political parties ought to realize this situation if they want to curry favour with the province of Quebec. The problems of Quebec will not be solved merely by providing economic