

The Address—Mr. Coldwell

platforms during the election period, for a national old age pension plan without a means test.

I could enumerate, of course, other promises we regard as unfulfilled pledges. But with the overwhelming following which the government has in this house, there can now be no excuse for delay in bringing down the necessary legislation to implement the promises and the pledges that have been made to the Canadian electorate from time to time.

Looking at the speech from the throne, we find that it foreshadows a great deal of important legislation and it would seem to involve a heavier and a longer session than some observers thought likely before the house was called. Before parliament was dissolved in April last, the budget resolutions had not been considered. Little discussion of the estimates had taken place. The house had granted interim supply to the government to enable it to carry on the business of the country until the end of this month. One of the present duties of this parliament is of course to scrutinize the expenditures of the government and to provide money to carry on its business in the future. I think it is our duty to scrutinize carefully the expenditures made, and I suggest that the public accounts committee should be called early this session so that past expenditures may be more thoroughly scrutinized than they have been in some former sessions.

The speech from the throne records the presence in this parliament of representatives from the new province of Newfoundland. We join most heartily in welcoming them as members of this House of Commons, and in expressing the belief that the entry of Newfoundland into confederation will prove beneficial to the people of old Canada, to the new province of Newfoundland, and indeed to the new confederation. In this session of parliament in which for the first time are united all the scattered British colonies of North America, as I believe they were called at the time of the Quebec conference, it is fitting that we should consider ways and means of rounding out our nationhood so that it will be more complete than it has been in the past.

In the same spirit we welcome the decision of the government to consult with the provinces at an early date with a view to agreeing upon an appropriate procedure for making within Canada such amendments to the constitution as may be necessary from time to time. We agree with the statement to this effect in the speech from the throne and trust that the hopes held out for the success of such a conference will prove to have been well founded.

The speech from the throne also expresses the hope for world peace and security under the auspices of the United Nations, and specifically and correctly states that the hopes we held in 1945 and the years that immediately followed have not been fulfilled. We believe of course that the fear of military aggression has been minimized by the North Atlantic agreement, but we urge the government to continue every effort to bring into effect the security provisions of the United Nations charter, thus relieving Canada—as I remember the Prime Minister stated before the assembly in 1946—and all the other nations from the crushing burden of national defence and rearmament, and releasing for us the means of improving in so many respects the conditions of our own Canadian people. After all, the best insurance against war is a healthy social and economic structure enjoyed by all our people. It is of the utmost importance that we shall do everything we can to improve the economic and social well-being of our people and of the north Atlantic community. But it is equally important—and in some respects perhaps more important—that the economic health and well-being of the peoples of Asia and of the world generally shall be promoted in every possible way in order to remove the economic causes of war and the discontent which fosters the spread of totalitarianism in any form.

Canada has been a direct beneficiary of the economic aid which the United States has given to the European nations. Without that aid our own position economically would be vastly different from what it is today. Indeed, the provision of United States dollars for the purchase of Canadian wheat by the United Kingdom enables us to market a large quantity of that commodity this very crop year. United States aid to Europe has enabled Canada to maintain a considerable amount of economic stability which, incidentally, is as vital to our own country as it is to the economy of the European nations. When we remember that some \$800 million of Marshall aid, so-called, will be spent in Canada during the next year, we can understand why, in common with the United States, we have been able to maintain an unexpectedly high level of employment and trade—and I use the word “unexpectedly” advisedly, because I remember the report of the James commission, the government’s own commission, which was placed before this house in the late years of the war, which predicted considerable post-war unemployment. Happily this has not yet materialized.

But it is authoritatively stated that this United States aid will end within the next three years. It is therefore the obligation