

The Address—Mr. H. O. White

One of the achievements of the former minister of finance, aided and abetted by the governor of the bank, was this 48-cent dollar, brought about in 16 years. Indirectly this has robbed the people who have saved for their old age. They have been deprived of 50 per cent of their savings, and it made penurious those on fixed incomes.

Canadians never again will indulge in the luxury of believing that the cabinet cannot be wrong. These men are mortal, just like the rest of us. Thousands of my constituents could give the Minister of Finance (Mr. Harris) a few pointers on deficit financing. Never since the thirties have so many people been in the same predicament as the government, with insufficient money to pay the bills. I suggest to the minister that he should be forced to do what they will have to do; first of all curtail or eliminate unnecessary expenditures, go without luxuries, and work at those enterprises giving the greatest hope for the production of new wealth.

I would remind the minister that thousands of Canadians who paid income tax last year will not be contributors in 1955. I would remind him that the 10 per cent sales tax will bear more heavily than ever on those who are least able to pay. I would remind him that the income from that source will likely diminish. I would remind him that individuals and industry alike, so far as taxation is concerned, are now bearing all that the traffic will bear. I would remind him again that our customs and excise structure is out of date. I would remind him also that tariff for revenue is excessive, and is not serving its original purpose. I would remind him that any increase in taxation is out of the question, and that the burden on the municipalities of caring for the unemployed is absolutely wrong, because from these very same people this government has taken in income tax almost a third of their earned income. It has taken in sales tax 10 per cent of the cost of most purchases; it has taken customs and excise duties on imported goods; and on some goods manufactured in this country it has imposed a tariff giving greater protection than necessary to the industry. And there is not much hope, because election year is too far away, to expect any tax reductions. None of us has forgotten that the stamp tax on cheques was removed, and that only a few months later postage rates were increased. People will not forget those things.

There is one further way, although perhaps a small one, in which the minister could reduce expenses. I would suggest that he fire the man who is responsible for the caricature of the Queen on our dollar bills.

[Mr. White (Middlesex East).]

Most Canadians welcome assistance for the Colombo plan. The leader of the Social Credit party spoke about it tonight, and I listened to him with considerable interest. But I would remind the minister responsible for that department that Canadians are not pleased with the very limited purchases of Canadian technical and agricultural equipment, which limitation is greatly to the detriment of Canadian labour. Purchases are made in the United States, while Canadian labourers manufacturing farm machinery in Brantford, Toronto and Hamilton have been idle.

Canadians do not like that. They believe it is a good thing to assist in the Colombo plan, but they like to see the dollars spent in Canada, and I do not blame them. Let us spend as large a percentage as possible for the purchase of Canadian goods.

Then to the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) I wish to say a word or two about the window dressing in the province of Quebec. Between sessions there have been many items in the press regarding the difficulties of federal and provincial taxation. I believe all people in Canada watched with interest the progress of negotiations that were taking place. Though the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Drew) during three or four sessions of parliament had pressed upon the government the need for a dominion-provincial conference to discuss taxation and other matters, this procedure was not deemed necessary by the government. But when the premier of Quebec and the Prime Minister of Canada got together they decided that was the right thing to do. Now Canadians are wondering about the silence on this subject in the speech from the throne.

Mr. Dufresne: Some members of the cabinet do not want any agreement with Quebec.

Mr. White (Middlesex East): I think the Prime Minister owes an explanation to the country regarding his talks with the premier of Quebec. For years Liberals have talked about the unholy alliance between Drew and Duplessis, but now they find themselves in the same boat. If ever there were two men who should be able to resolve the difficulty and come out of it with national unity, certainly they are the men; and we are looking to them for an explanation.

With all the problems facing Canadians at this time I am alarmed to think that probably within the next two or three days there will be interruptions in the debate on the speech from the throne drawing the attention of the people away from the pressing problems of the day and from the pressure on the government, and directing their thoughts along other lines. If there was such haste about