

Procedure of Legislative Program

What about the handling of the Mackenzie Valley pipeline? This is a beautiful and magnificent example of a unified, decisive, dynamically united government! Not only do you have to find out which minister is speaking to know what the policy is; you have to check all the speeches of one minister because they are internally contradictory.

• (1740)

I have done quite an exercise in this regard and I hope some student will produce an MA thesis on the lack of government solidarity. This is about the right period if he wants to make first-hand observations. Another issue which is interesting, if you want to talk about being decisive, is that concerning fisheries. Will we tell the fishermen of Canada that this government gives them strong, decisive leadership? Just try telling that to the fishermen on the east coast and the west coast. With all due apologies to the party to the left, the government is waffling, weaselling and pusillanimous. It cannot stand up for our fishermen even against the smallest countries of the world, yet it has the nerve to talk about being decisive.

Another area that might be in someone's mind when we talk about decisions is that of constitutional reform. The minister went back over the whole four years. I will have to cover the same terrain to be consistent with him. What about constitutional amendments and those glorious days when we were going to settle this problem? The four years of the present government have been marked with frustration and non-accomplishment in the constitutional field. This country is no more united than it was in 1968. We have had dominion-provincial conferences one after the other, which have amounted to nothing more than polite failures. We are not even up to the Fulton-Favreau stage on constitutional amendment; in fact, we have gone back.

There were some Canadians in 1968 who thought they might be choosing a government which would put some solutions forward to our vexing constitutional problems. The minister spoke about the bleak dawn that was following a rosy period. I say to him that for this government the moonlight reveries of 1968 are long since passed. It is not dawn we are at now, it is high noon, and you know what happens at high noon. He quoted the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) and said, "We propose and they dispose". I suggest it will not be us, but the people of Canada who will dispose: they will dispose of the government.

Mrs. Grace MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, in his hard hitting, well documented speech this afternoon the leader of our party put forth a bill of indictment against this government for its record of legislation which has favoured the wealthy and corporate segments of Canada and shamefully neglected and undermined the well-being of the people in the low and middle income groups. He is not the only one in this country to bring this type of indictment against the government.

At a meeting this week in Quebec City of delegates to the Canadian Council on Social Development, a report was discussed. It was prepared by top civil servants in the federal government and by social workers from across

[Mr. Macquarrie.]

the country. Let me quote some of the things said in this report:

The federal government through its anti-inflationary policies is seen to be increasing the number of Canadian families in need of public financial assistance—a decision in which the provincial and municipal governments are not included.

But the federal government contributes only 50 per cent of the increased welfare funds needed by the provinces and the municipalities.

This underlines what the previous speaker pointed out, the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie). This government, in spite of the boasts and claims that it was going to clear up the constitutional muddle, has done nothing whatsoever of a tangible nature to get rid of these very severe dislocations which affect people's lives. Let me quote again from this report:

What has resulted, in Canada, is a fragmented approach to a wide range of possible objectives, accompanied by ad hoc policies involving duplication and conflict—conflict among programs, among government agencies and different levels of government or between private and public interests.

What is required is a new and comprehensive framework of goals and objectives to serve as a basis for policy planning.

One thing this government will not do is plan a comprehensive framework within which to work. It will not do so because it will not take the only objective which is workable, and that is to orient its policies toward the well-being of people and the environment in which they live, instead of orienting them to suit the large corporations and their profit-making ventures. Consequently, the government does nothing or worse than nothing.

The report goes on to say that in the past 20 years the spread between the richest and the poorest income categories in Canada may have widened by at least 30 per cent. It says there has been no change in the distribution of income during this time. It warns that low income people have lost faith in the government because they feel they cannot exercise influence over the policy decisions of government.

Let me give one example of why I think there has been this loss of faith on a large scale. We have in this country what is known as the National Anti-Poverty Organization. It is an organization of people who have had a rough time in life, people on social assistance in every field you can name, low rents, housing tenants, people concerned with family day-care centres because they must go out to work, single family heads who have to work, young people and a whole range of low income people.

The National Anti-Poverty Organization was formed under great difficulty. However, it has held conferences in British Columbia, Nova Scotia and Manitoba. The organization was fortunate enough to obtain a grant under LIP which was used up at the end of May. These people did not realize that there was a regulation to the effect that any program or project requesting an extension at the end of May could only be funded to June 16. Being anxious for funding, as they were very close to their margin, they put in an application for an extension, only to learn that under the regulations there is no possibility of being funded to September.

What will happen to all the attempts of these poor people who have been trying hard to gain a little confidence in themselves within the framework of law and