

I suggest to the House, through Your Honour, that one need only consider the documents brought forward by the Government since I have been here. There have been three or perhaps four budgets, some of them couched in the term "financial statement", but nevertheless economic statements. These statements were supposed to indicate to Canadians, through the House of Commons, how the Government would meet the economic problems of the land, and in so doing meet the social problems which are naturally related to the downturn of the economy.

We had an opportunity to debate those matters but no one paid any attention. We had an opportunity to put forward our alternatives. No one paid any attention. In 1981 we were saying that the high interest policy of the Bank of Canada, together with the concurrence in that policy by the Government of Canada, was driving people off the land, was requiring those with small businesses to close up and move, was driving people out of their homes because they could not afford to pay the mortgage and that the Government should therefore adopt a new posture, a new direction. The Government ignored us. To have had yet another debate during a Throne Speech would not have made any difference, would not have made it any better. There is no point debating if one is talking to oneself or if the Government is not prepared to listen. I say, sadly, that it is my view that the Government failed to listen anyway. To say it one more time would not alter that fact.

I recall when unemployment was at 940,000. We were saying that with the direction the Government was taking, unemployment would no doubt be at 1.5 million within a year, and then over two million. It would continue to grow with a snowballing effect. We said that there had to be Government intervention and a change in direction but no one believed it, least of all the Government of Canada. Therefore it did not introduce the types of policies necessary to meet those crises.

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A Throne Speech debate would not have altered that situation. The Government did not care and was not going to listen to us. I did not even listen to those who were supposedly their supporters throughout the country. The direction in which the country was headed would hardly have been altered if the Government had another chance to tell us. Did the Government ever attempt to ameliorate or respond to the problems which we spoke about that directly related to the upward spiral in the price of energy or to the fact that we had to come to grips with the difficulties facing not only families in meeting energy and transportation costs but the many businesses that were being adversely affected by ever-increasing energy prices in almost every community in the country? Not at all. The Government continued in its direction of ever-increasing energy cost notwithstanding the fact that this is Canadian energy that could and should be used for the development of this country.

You will recall, Mr. Speaker, the discussions that took place in the House week after week about bankruptcy levels. It is no longer news to raise the issue that bankruptcy levels this year are considerably higher than last year and that those levels last year are higher than the year before. The news is that the

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Government has failed to bring forward policies, in spite of that fact, which would enable the recovery of businesses which were unable to manage in the marketplace as a result of the rise in the cost of money.

We said that this is the serious problem in the country which should be addressed. My colleague, the Hon. Member for Brant (Mr. Blackburn), rose time after time in the House to point out the difficulties that high interest rates, given their effect on small businesses, were creating for the Brantford and Brant countries. Every other Member of the House on the opposition side raised similar concerns for their respective constituency.

Did the Government change its direction? Not at all. Day after day, the untold misery being heaped upon misery in every community was raised in the House. The academic argument about whether we should have a Throne Speech, interesting though it is, pales into insignificance when measured against the fact that the Government's policies, without the benefit of a Throne Speech, have been ruinous, unresponsive and have flown in the face of most, if not all, advice given to it not only from this side of the House but I suspect by its own backbenchers. There has even been evidence that during the course of the last three years a number of Government backbenchers were dissatisfied with how the Government was reacting to the problems.

As I study this question I suggest that if Hon. Members wish to argue for Throne Speeches, it is fair enough. If they believe that it is valuable to have the Government announce proposals that it does not intend to act upon, while it does not tell us what it intends to do, I suppose we can go through the exercise. If it is of any value to have the Governor General sit in the Senate and read a statement prepared by the Government about all the beneficial things it proposes to do but does not intend to proceed with, then let us do it.

However, the real measure of the worth of Parliament will be whether we are able to solicit some concrete action from the Government that will be of benefit to Canadians in every walk of life and primarily to those who are suffering the most. Will this institution meet the expectations of those who are unemployed and cannot find employment, those coming out of the schools system in the country unable to anticipate any degree of assurance of an opportunity to provide an economic well-being for themselves and their families, those who are disillusioned and disappointed and those who believed that Parliament was truly representative and that Government did, in fact, care about what happened to them? As a result of the Government's three years of total mismanagement and neglect, those Canadians have now reached the point of throwing up their hands in increasingly large numbers and asking "What is the use?"

I think that is what is most disturbing. I was in Prairie Canada recently speaking in Brandon, Manitoba about Canada's problems. More than half of those who spoke to me—they were not all New Democrats by any means—were