

The Address—Mr. Winch

make a few comments on the speech itself, then to touch on a matter of great concern to my constituents in Vancouver East and, finally, to speak briefly on a situation in Canada which, as I see it, is most serious and urgent.

May I say right away that there does not appear to be a great deal of difference between the various speeches from the Throne which I have heard over the years. I say this from the point of view of one who has had some experience with such matters, counting both the provincial legislature and this House of Commons. This, the second session of the twenty-eighth Parliament of Canada, is my thirty-ninth session, counting time spent in both legislative bodies, so I have listened to 39 speeches from the throne.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Winch: Mr. Speaker, the one we are now considering does not differ substantially from the majority of those I have heard in the past, inasmuch as to a considerable extent it is based on wishful thinking, generalities and platitudes. Nevertheless, I have never felt it was the sole responsibility of a member of the opposition merely to criticize and condemn the government, so I should like, initially, to commend the government for offering an indication that at least some consideration is being given to long term planning.

One of the great shortcomings evident in our parliamentary history is a failure to recognize and accept the need for long-term planning. There is, in my opinion, a definite indication now that this is in the mind of the cabinet, and this is why I commend hon. gentlemen on the front benches opposite even though, if my analysis is correct, it may take up to ten years to bring some of their projects to fruition. Having said this, I must express my keen disappointment that the Speech from the Throne failed to indicate that any consideration is being given by this government to bringing forth constructive policies and legislation to meet the urgent and difficult problems facing certain groups of people in this country. I refer particularly to hundreds of thousands who are living on fixed incomes and whose needs are apparently to be completely ignored.

A great many of the speakers preceding me have mentioned the plight of our senior citizens and others. I wish to draw attention to the situation facing our veterans. Before doing so, may I express the opinion that it is a disgrace that we should hear the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and the Minister of

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Finance (Mr. Benson), as we have in the last few days, pounding their collective breasts, if I may use that expression, and boasting of the fact that this year we shall have a balanced budget for the first time in many years. A balanced budget is all to the good, but a balanced budget which is achieved by sacrificing hundreds of thousands of needy people is a disgrace to those who boast about it.

• (3:00 p.m.)

Mention has been made of senior citizens and others. I cannot understand why nothing has been said so far about the needs of the veterans and the widows of veterans. Our veterans waited three years for the Woods report, and over a year for the white paper that was published. No action has been taken on either. When the white paper was published, a white paper that I think I am safe in saying was basically a fait accompli as far as government decision was concerned, it gave no indication of any recognition of the need of our veterans. As far as we can gather there is no indication whatever in the white paper of an increase in the basic pensions of the veterans of this country.

The answer we are given is that veterans pensions are part of the over-all task force study of the entire social security legislation of our country. Even the term "welfare legislation" has been used to describe these payments. Any government that takes the view that rightful payments to veterans is welfare is adopting a disgraceful position and is unworthy of the support of the people of this country. Such a government is letting down those men and women who, in two world wars and in Korea, offered their lives in this country's time of need. I say that these payments to our veterans are a right not welfare.

I sincerely hope that the government is going to have a change of mind and heart. Although this matter is not mentioned in the Speech from the Throne, and is completely ignored in the white paper, I hope action will be taken during this session to increase the basic pension of the veterans of Canada. Certainly, this would mean a great deal in my own riding where there are thousands of veterans. For example, I have six veterans organizations in my constituency of Vancouver East.

Mention of the white paper brings me to another matter that I think should receive serious consideration by the government. I appreciate that the throne speech makes clear