

*The Address—Mr. Deans*

leadership they anticipated and that, in the final analysis, they will find what I have done here on their behalf will be to their liking and they might even consider sending me back, which is unusual for the constituency that I represent.

I do not intend to dwell at great length on the constituency, although I want to point out a couple of things that are important in terms of what my constituents feel about both government and Parliament. To begin with, I sent out a little questionnaire not long after the election. I asked them to explain to me what they felt were the important matters that should be dealt with by this government and what they expected of me in terms of what I should be saying.

It came through loud and clear that the primary concern of the majority of people, all of whom are very hardworking and have spent a great deal of time trying to build their place in the Hamilton community, is the impact of interest rates, not only in terms of mortgages, although that would be one of the primary concerns, but also in terms of the purchasing power that they are losing day by day to the ever-increasing mortgage interest rate and the ever-increasing consumer rate that they are going to have to pay and, indeed, are now paying.

They are also expressing a concern about the impact of that on jobs as they are unable to find the necessary consumer dollars to buy the goods that they normally would purchase. They know, as I know, as any member here knows, that the impact of that on the people who are working and producing those consumer products that would normally be purchased, is a very great impact indeed. Over the course of the next short while, because of the reduction in purchasing power that the higher and higher interest rates are bringing about, there will undoubtedly be a reduction in the manufacturing sector. That reduction will mean fewer people working. As one person said to me, as fewer people work, those of us who can find jobs will be required to pay even more in order to maintain the structures that we have set up.

It seems to me, and to a lot of people like me in this country, that it is vital that this Parliament address itself immediately to the problem of high interest rates. The cost of purchasing in terms of what must be paid in interest alone has gone all out of proportion. I expect to hear better from the Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) than his statements which, frankly, made no sense in the last two days when he spoke about the small number of people who may be assisted by a mortgage interest program. He spoke about the others who will simply have to bear the burden and find a way to pay it. I know my constituents do not agree with that, and I want to make it clear to the Minister of Finance on their behalf that I do not agree with it either.

● (1750)

The high cost of living, which is a subject rarely addressed, exacts its toll on pensioners, on low and middle income families attempting to find their own way. It is time Parliament set aside a block of time to deal with the components which make up the ever-increasing cost of living. It is time members set aside time to speak to each other and to the government about

what specific actions might reasonably be taken to control the ever increasing cost of living because, unless we do, we shall find that the industrial base of the country is being undermined—less and less of the money people earn will be available for the purchase of the things we produce across the country, and if we cannot buy what we produce because we have to tie up so much of the money which is available simply to provide the essentials, then obviously the effect will once again be a reduction in manufacturing and employment.

We must ever be cautious that we do not allow the cost of the essential part of life—housing, food, medical care, education—to reach such outrageous proportions in terms of capacity to earn that people having nothing left to spend on other and more enjoyable but, nevertheless, in our society from an economic point of view, equally important areas in which money ought to be spent.

I want to say a brief word about the problems in Quebec. I do not understand them well, I must confess, and I say to my colleagues from Quebec, not being from Quebec, that it is difficult to be truly understanding of what is happening in that province. I would have liked, tonight, to say a word or two in French, but I say to you, quite truthfully, Mr. Speaker, that had I done that I would not have understood it and, perhaps, neither would you. But I have enrolled in a French class and some day before this Parliament is over I swear I will stand here and do it, believe me.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Deans:** Nevertheless, let me tell hon. members something that I do understand, or at least, I think I do. I have watched Parliament work for many years, as you know, and I do not understand why it is that the people of Quebec feel their grievances have not been adequately presented to Parliament. I do not understand this, given that the proportion of the total membership of the House of Commons which is assigned to the province of Quebec is significant, and I do not understand it in terms of the fact that the Liberal party from which most of the Quebec members come has formed the government for a significant period of time and that, during this period, the members who represent Quebec have surely made representations to the government, to their colleagues in the cabinet, about the problems of the province, and surely they have been listened to. Now, either the cabinet has not paid attention to its own members or the members have not made the arguments well. I am not going to judge which is the case. But there is something terribly wrong when a province feels so alienated, giving the strong representation that it has.

I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that it is important the people of Quebec should understand that the rest of us in Canada would very much like to find a resolution to the constitutional problems which seem to bedevil the relationship not only between the province of Quebec and the rest of Canada but also between other parts of Canada and the federal system. I think it is fair to say there is no member in this House who is not prepared to devote whatever time is necessary to find solutions to these constitutional problems, to hammer out the