

The Address—Mr. Richardson

We in the West know our environment well. It has moulded our character. The self-reliance of our pioneers and homesteaders was borne of the physical separation of their settlements, the long prairie winters and the unremitting toil of breaking prairie sod and forcing it to produce in abundance.

With the advances that modern technology has brought, we now live, work and play in that environment. We know that the destruction of the environment would ultimately be the destruction of ourselves.

In environmental protection this Throne Speech holds great promise for the immediate future, but despite this I say this Government should be on guard. We westerners will continue to demand action to protect the environment, but we will also continue to resent "experts" from elsewhere who would come to our beautiful parks and forests and tell us what we must do to protect them without regard to our needs, to our feelings or to the facts. Environmental protection is absolutely vital, but it must always be carried out with a view to utility. Westerners do not need lessons on the preservation and protection of our environmental heritage. What we do need is a fair chance to make our own case to other Canadians about how best to protect and enjoy the environment in which we live.

• (1210)

In 1984, there was one federal Cabinet Minister from western Canada. Today, there are ten.

In 1984, unfair freight rates remained one of the major grievances of western Canada about Confederation. Today those unfair rates are gone as a result of the National Transportation Act which came into effect into January of this year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Richardson: In 1984, inflexible regional development programs meant that Alberta sometimes received no money from these federal Government programs. Now we have a new Department of Western Economic Diversification with its headquarters in Edmonton. Decisions for the West are being made in the West.

From 1980 to 1984, Alberta received one per cent of total federal job-creation funds. Alberta now receives 10 per cent of job-creation funds, which exceeds the per capita national average.

In early 1984, in rural Alberta, in what has come to be known as the "red barn speech", the Prime Minister, then Opposition Leader, made a personal commitment to get rid of the National Energy Program. Today the National Energy Program, the PGRT, and FIRA are dead and gone.

When the oil industry in the West was on its knees the Government responded with CEDIP and flow-through shares. When our agriculture industry was on its knees this Government responded with the Special Canadian Grains Program and drought assistance. Today this Government's energy Minister is a westerner. This Government's agriculture Minister is a westerner.

There is still more to be done. The Government must ensure equality of treatment of all regions of Canada. The Government must ensure that important federal agencies and contracts are assigned to those regions where they are best suited. As westerners we want to be full and equal partners in Confederation. Regional discontent will remain until we are.

We have made a great start. I am proud of the record of the Government. The Speech from the Throne raises the expectation of an even greater future.

Therefore, I have the honour to move, seconded by the Hon. Member for Bourassa (Mrs. Gibeau), that the following address be presented to Her Excellency, the Governor General of Canada:

To Her Excellency the Right Honourable Jeanne Sauv , a Member of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Chancellor and Principal Companion of the Order of Canada, Chancellor and Commander of the Order of Military Merit, upon whom has been conferred the Canadian Forces Decoration, Governor General and Commander in Chief of Canada:

May it please Your Excellency, we, Her Majesty's loyal and dutiful subjects, the House of Commons of Canada, in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Excellency for the gracious speech which Your Excellency has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie Gibeau (Bourassa): Mr. Speaker, it is with a sense of great pleasure and pride that I second the address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

The clear and courageous vision expressed in the Speech from the Throne is an eloquent response to the expectations of Canadians.