

The Address—Mr. Clark

House leaders' meeting. These are meetings which I enjoy. If that is the case, can the Deputy Prime Minister inform the House, now, whether he is planning a meeting of House leaders to discuss, among other things, the length of the throne speech debate and the order of business of the House so that the House can, in fact, in the words of the Prime Minister, get down to the business of legislating?

Mr. MacEachen: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I will be glad to meet with the other party representatives on House business early in the week and get down to legislative items, probably on Wednesday because on Tuesday we will have the vote on the amendment, and I would not want to bring on legislation until we had effectively defeated the amendment and subamendment which will be brought forward by the opposition.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1502)

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

[English]

CONTINUATION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed, from Wednesday, October 11, consideration of the motion of Mrs. Ursula Appolloni for an address to His Excellency the Governor General in reply to his speech at the opening of the session.

Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: —I think that applause came from all sides of the House.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: I want to begin my full contribution to this debate in reply to the Speech from the Throne by extending my very sincere congratulations to the mover and the seconder of the motion, the hon. member for York South (Mrs. Appolloni), whom I had an opportunity to congratulate personally outside the House yesterday, and the hon. member for Verdun (Mr. Savard). I think the two members distinguished themselves in their remarks. I am sure they would not expect that we on this side of the House would agree with every nuance of what they said, but I am sure all my colleagues on this side of the House join me in extending congratulations to them for the excellent job they did in beginning this debate.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: I want also to take this opportunity—the first presented to me since the announcement yesterday in the Speech from the Throne of the intention of His Excellency the Governor General not to seek a longer term in office and to relinquish his heavy duties at the end of this term—to express

[Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton).]

on behalf of all of us in this party our admiration of the sensitivity of His Excellency the Governor General to the Canadian reality and to Canadian conditions and of the leadership he has exercised with the support of Madame Léger.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

Mr. Clark: As an ambassador, Mr. Léger represented Canada in Latin America, Central America and Europe and it was at the end of a brilliant diplomatic career that he accepted a very important position in this country. Shortly afterwards he suffered a heart attack. He has shown an exemplary courage and I am sure that all Canadians have been inspired by his will to live and work.

The source of that courage is undoubtedly Madame Léger who has admirably supported her husband in those difficult times and who has taken up the many challenges that she had to face with gracefulness and dignity. I sincerely appreciate, as do all Canadians, their great contribution to this country for which they have shown so much love.

[English]

I want to make one brief reference to that struggling party to my left.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Clark: We in this party are of course becoming accustomed to having our proposals borrowed, but not usually by the NDP. As the leader of that party will know, on September 7 the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker), the House leader of the official opposition in this chamber, made the proposal that we on this side of the House would be quite prepared to forgo the throne speech debate if the government would be prepared to start this session, as it should, with a new budget. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien) made it clear yesterday—and he is most adept at evading budgets—that he is not ready for a budget after all these months of preparation and of crisis, and consequently we cannot expect one until perhaps some time in the middle of November. So we are in a situation where we have no budget and we have a throne speech which has very few proposals.

Frankly, I think that there is an obligation upon all parties in the House, excepting the government which has forgotten its obligation, to use the opportunity of the throne speech debate, in the absence of government proposals, to put forward proposals of our own on the way in which this country should be led, and measures which can bring unity, economic growth, and jobs to the country.

I recognize that it imposes a particular hardship upon the NDP to have to propose anything positive. I sympathize with the leader of that party and his colleagues, and I quite understand that they would eagerly seek the opportunity to avoid any occasion on which they might be called upon to make positive proposals for the betterment of the country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!