

*The Address*

That is the opposite of what the Minister of Agriculture is trying to do. I want to emphasize that fact. The minister is very much in negotiations with the secretary of agriculture for the United States and is very definitely trying to negotiate an agreement to keep tariffs high, which is our right and should be our right under the GATT. That is exactly what he is trying to do. He is trying to have them high enough to keep our supply managed system in place, in tact and secure.

**Mr. John Solomon (Regina—Lumsden):** Mr. Speaker, this is the first opportunity I have had to speak in the House of Commons. I wish to commence by congratulating you, Sir, on your appointment and congratulating all newly elected members on their first venture to the House of Commons. It is quite an exciting place to be.

I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to the former member for Regina—Lumsden, Mr. Les Benjamin. Les Benjamin served his constituents and his country for 25 years. He was a very strong voice on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan and the people of Canada. In particular he was an ardent defender of issues such as the wheat board, the Crow rate and rail transportation. It is with some sadness that I report to the House that he is now in the hospital and is very ill. I understand he is doing well in spirit. On behalf of the constituents of Regina—Lumsden I pay tribute to his service to the country.

I represent a district which has the capital city of Saskatchewan, Regina. It is an urban area with some rural parts to it, including the farms and towns of Lumsden, Regina Beach, Grand Coulee and Pense. There is also a major steel and pipe producer in our riding by the name of IPSCO. It employs a substantial number of people and is a significant contributor to the economy of both Regina and Saskatchewan.

• (1930)

I thank very much the families and the voters of Regina—Lumsden who have given me their support and their confidence during the last number of months, and in particular during the election campaign. I am honoured to be their representative. I am proud to speak in the House on their behalf. My commitment to them is to work as hard as I can on their behalf to ensure they have a voice in Parliament and that they have someone who will speak about their priorities.

Their priorities are the priorities of the majority of Canadians. They want a government that is open, honest and accountable for its actions. They want a government that does all in its power to ensure that more Canadians are working and that we have a strong economy. These people in my district—and I think it is throughout Canada—want more fairness in taxation policies. They want social programs which meet the needs of our people. I will work as hard as I can to ensure that the priorities of the people of Regina—Lumsden are the priorities of the government and of Parliament.

The throne speech was one of the shortest throne speeches ever. It is 17 minutes short if it is read very slowly. It leaves Canadians to wonder if this means the government does not want to tell us what it is going to do or that it does not know what is going to happen next. What concerns me is that it is probably the problem.

This new Parliament is faced with a job crisis in Canada. Over two million people are out of work. Unemployment is at record levels, even worse than during the great depression of the 1930s. Underemployment is widespread and much of the blame has to rest on the shoulders of the previous government. The previous Conservative government chose to deregulate industries causing lost jobs. It chose to have a high interest rate policy. It cancelled the manufacturers' federal sales tax. It brought in the GST and implemented other monetary policies which drove jobs away from Canada.

As well the previous government chose to sign the U.S.—Canada Free Trade Agreement and the North American Free Trade Agreement, both opposed by the Liberals in opposition but endorsed and embraced by that same party while in government. The FTA and NAFTA have not only cost Canadians hundreds of thousands of lost jobs but have reduced our ability as government to make sovereign decisions which affect our lives.

As we go through some of the policies of the previous government one concludes they were all meant to serve the corporate agenda that allows the powerful corporations the ability to make their own economic decisions unfettered without contributing their fair share to the economy. This Conservative agenda has increased corporate profits, created high unemployment, driven up government deficits and debt, and jeopardized our ability to provide the population with jobs and decent social programs.

What is the answer to the serious problems in our country? By reading the speech from the throne the Liberal government's answer appears to be that it does not know. Canadians had better brace themselves because it looks like the job crisis and the corporate agenda will continue. What the government must do is put people first in its agenda rather than the wealthy corporations and the wealthy families.

It seems to me the government has already shown its lack of concern for jobs by backing down on NAFTA and by flip-flopping on the U.S.—Canada Free Trade Agreement which weakened our economic well being and our manufacturing sector in particular.

In their throne speech the Liberals have backed down on their promise of jobs, jobs, jobs by not announcing the apprenticeship program. An apprenticeship program is desperately needed across the country by 400,000 jobless young Canadians. Does this mean the Liberal promise of jobs training for these young people has been forgotten? It may be forgotten by the Liberals