

*The Address—Mr. de Corneille*

sors did, irrespective of the political affiliations of my constituents.

In speaking to the resolution expressing our appreciation to His Excellency the Governor General, I should like to pay my respects to the mover and seconder of this motion. I should like to add to their observations that, as I heard the Speech from the Throne, I saluted its reference to the intention of the government to take certain steps which I believe would add to a series of reforms to parliamentary government which have been under way for years. I make particular, favourable reference to the government's announced intention to provide members of parliament as individuals with additional opportunity to work more effectively on behalf of their constituents by giving greater attention to private members' bills. The last government had already done much to help members be more effective parliamentarians by making it possible for them to improve their facilities and staff and by allowing television to report the events which take place in this House.

I was also happy to see reference in the throne speech to the establishment of a select committee to enquire fully into the special needs of handicapped and disabled Canadians. The human rights of these fellow Canadians are easily passed over because all too often they are out of sight and, therefore, out of mind.

I also was pleased to note that special attention was paid to strengthen the role of the voluntary sector in our society. Although I have worked in the fields of commerce and finance myself, most of my subsequent career has been dedicated to service in non-governmental organizations, or N.G.O.'s, as they are called; in the service of the church; in the League for Human Rights of B'nai B'rith, and so forth. I have personally witnessed the tremendous contribution such voluntary organizations make, at no cost to the taxpayer. These organizations deserve encouragement, whether their orientations are spiritual, humanitarian, cultural, athletic, philanthropic, or whatever.

Although I rejoice to hear these references in the Speech from the Throne, it disappoints me that many of these reforms will lead only to the setting up of committees rather than to action. It sounds like "committees" rather than "commitment". It is, therefore, with deep regret that I have to say that although I wanted to be optimistic, although I had hoped against hope that I would discern some real progress, some real direction, I must now admit to profound disappointment.

The so-called program presented by the government of what it has in store for us fulfils my previous fears of what might happen if we had a Tory government. My analysis and conclusions have not had to be hasty. As members of Parliament we have had a long time, five months, to make our observations, albeit from a distance and through a glass darkly, but now with the throne speech at last face to face. What we see is a government of evasion; it is bland, it is blank, it is empty and void. I have searched deeply into my soul. I have asked myself, is this the kind of Speech from the Throne worthy of a new minority government? Is this speech adequate enough as a basis for legislation or for policy, or as a guide or a plan, or even an outline, as we cross the threshold of the 1980s? What

[Mr. de Corneille.]

I find is a vapid, vacuous evasion of the problems of the world and of the challenges to our nation.

At a time when the world is shaken by revolutions and genocide, by oil shortages and arbitrary price hikes, by monetary instability and inflation, by international power plays and Third and Fourth World hunger and destitution, and at a time when our country, under pressure from these external forces, is in need of reassurance of sound policies on energy, interest rates and employment, we listen to the throne speech and wonder whether we are listening to a government that is on another planet. I have been searching my soul, as I know millions of Canadians have, and have wondered, after this long time of waiting since the election, whether the intervening time has possibly been used for anything more than to allow the pirates to divide up the political spoils at the captain's table while our Canadian ship of state is floundering on a troubled sea of world tensions in violent economic storms.

Imagine my amazement—our amazement as parliamentarians—to hear the pledge of the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Clark) in the Speech from the Throne that his policy is "to make my ministers more responsible to you". What inconsistency, what irony, what a paradox! How can they be more responsible to us when for months on end they did not call Parliament and would not give account to us? During all this time the ministers have not been responsible to us in this House nor in the other place. Does this long abstinence from parliamentary government set a precedent, or give any example, or lend any credibility to the principle of making "my ministers more responsible to you"? Hardly, do we feel, have they been responsible to this House.

● (1540)

As was the case for many hon. members, October 9 was the first time I ever laid eyes on many of these ministers since the election on May 22, and we had dissolution of Parliament in March. It has taken from May to October before we get our first chance to ask these responsible ministers to give an account. This is a jest. It is a travesty. Some of the ministers still have not had their first turn to speak, to give any account, and we are half way into October.

Most of the backbenchers will not have a chance to ask questions regarding problems in their ridings to these "accountable ministers" until next year. Is this consistent with the stated intent in the speech "to make my ministers more responsible to you", ministers who have not had to give account since May 22, except to the media which has nobly tried to squeeze from this dry rind some content which members of Parliament have yet had no chance to do? Is that a sincere and genuine concern for parliamentary reform, to keep the House closed down and shut while we get government by secret meetings behind closed doors in remote and comfortable retreats where the prying eyes of the dangerous press and members of Her Majesty's loyal opposition could not hear or speak, question or get a reply?

Yes, I am worried by the Speech from the Throne, and I lack confidence in the government that authored it. For exam-