

*The Address—Mr. Lewis*

pensions and veterans' pensions. However, the old age pension scheme still does not provide enough to meet in full justice the needs of older citizens.

I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that we the privileged of society have a tendency to forget that most jobs which are necessary for the good operation of our society are monotonous jobs which provide no personal satisfaction or esthetic reward. Picking up other people's refuse is neither a pleasant job nor one that pays. A man or a woman who must work at this kind of job for thirty or forty years is entitled to retire at 60 if he or she wishes to do so. And in order to do that society must assure them of a reasonable rate of pension because I am convinced that a great many Canadians who would like to retire at 60 do not have the means to do so.

[English]

Mr. Speaker, it is impossible in 30 or even 40 minutes to touch on all the areas with which I should like to concern myself today, but in concluding I want briefly to mention two other matters. I want to declare my deep disappointments in the government's failure even to mention the north of Canada or the native peoples of this country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: This is a heartbreaking failure, particularly because there are so many vital questions affecting the destiny and future of our native peoples. It is to me totally incomprehensible how the minister responsible could have permitted such neglect, a neglect that is as insensitive as it is dangerous not only to the native people but to the future democracy of this country.

The Speech from the Throne uses many words about agriculture, regional disparities and freight rate injustices. We have heard these words before. We have heard them many times and in many parliaments presided over by Liberal and Conservative governments. But the fact is that insecurity for the farmer remains, that the disparities grow across this country and that the national transportation policy of Canada continues to be a glaring failure under whatever minister presides over the department.

I say, Mr. Speaker, that we of the New Democratic Party want this parliament really to act, to stop being satisfied with words and to act so that the west, the east and the north of Canada may enjoy the same standard of development now enjoyed by the centre of our country.

I believe that the challenge that faces Canada now is the capacity of parliament and government to curb the powers and irresponsible actions of the corporations. Many of them have interests outside Canada because they are multinational. The challenge lies in our capacity to take effective steps to tax the exorbitant and excessive profits of the corporations; to make the corporations at last pay their fair share of the funds needed to run the country and to carry the social programs which alone give us the right to describe Canada as a civilized society. Above all, Mr. Speaker, we must take control of the Canadian economy out of the hands of the multinational corporations which treat our country, as they treat every other country, merely as another source of exploitable natural resources.

It is my firm belief that in this session we must, on behalf of all Canadians, reassert government leadership

[Mr. Lewis.]

and direction over the economy by new methods of social planning. Failure to do this will be failure to come to grips with the cost of living, with family security and with our economic future. I say in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, it will be a failure not of the Canadian people or of Canada; it is the future of the Canadian people and of Canada that will be seriously affected by the failure of this parliament to act.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, first of all I wish to congratulate the mover and the seconder of the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne (Messrs. Stollery (Spadina) and Pelletier (Sherbrooke)) who, according to the custom, have had the privilege to open this debate and, I must admit, they have carried out this task with spirit. If the Speech from the Throne had as much substance as theirs, Mr. Speaker, I would probably make different comments.

I listened with surprise to the Prime Minister's speech that I qualify as a political speech. And the interventions from the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) will be forgotten because for a long time he has been repeating the same thing. All that he is saying is, in effect, that if he were in power he would do better than the Liberals.

As far as the NDP is concerned, their members are again boasting for making the government work as they wish. Mr. Speaker, in view of the present situation in Canada, I wonder if it is the interest of the New Democratic Party to brag about their friendship with the Liberals.

Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleagues and I have just returned from a tour of our own ridings as well as neighbouring ones in the province of Quebec. We have met people from every walks of life: industrialists, professionals, labourers, unemployed people and even people on welfare.

I suppose that some hon. colleagues from the other parties have made the same experience, that is, to return to the people to find out what they think in order to better express their feelings to the House of Commons.

Mr. Speaker, this experience proved very rewarding to us because it has shown us some of the good and bad aspects of a number of legislative measures.

● (1740)

Following that, we had meetings in order to pool our experience. We want to be unbiased in the House. I think too many members in the House are playing politics more or less honestly and that delays our progress.

Excellent measures are brought forward in the Speech from the Throne and I wish to congratulate the government. It was about time we began for instance to encourage people to keep their farm.

We are anxious to see the content of the bills. Mr. Speaker, as I said a while ago, we are going to assume, as during the first session, an unbiased and honest stand, and go through what is brought forward in order to improve if possible certain pieces of legislation.