

The Address—Mr. Trudeau

country. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) will have more to say on this subject when he participates in this debate.

Mr. Bell: We can hardly wait.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, any government is responsible for a society and it assumes and exercises that responsibility according to certain principles, to a certain ideal that it has set for itself.

Now, if the ideal sought by the government is to establish a just society, it is because it believes that this should be the objective of any real democracy. Universal franchise, the equality of everyone before the law, which are the attributes of a democratic system, are obviously imbued with a spirit of justice. But those rights, however valuable they may be, are only illusive if they are not embodied in a still more basic right, which is, for the individual, the right to his vital self-development, according to his talents and capacities.

So when we talk about a "just society", we refer to a justice applied to the reality of every day life, embodied in the life of everyone. There is justice when everyone's essential needs are satisfied. This implies a reasonable access for all to the goods owned and produced by the country. Now, work is the normal mode of access to the goods on which life depends; it therefore cannot be dissociated from the right to live.

But since the state of the economy determines work possibilities, one of the primary expressions of the social philosophy of the government must be its economic policy.

Because of the rate of unemployment, the present economic situation can hardly be accepted; this we all know, Mr. Speaker. The difficult times we are going through exist throughout North America and, frankly, will probably persist for several more months. However, the steps we have already taken allow us to foresee increasing improvement during 1971.

As I have said, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) will have the opportunity to outline what other measures the government is taking and intends to take to strengthen our economy. But that field is so vast and complex that there is no single solution or remedy. Above all, there are no quick and immediate solutions. At first sight, some solutions may seem annoying, when they are always intended to ensure in the nearest reasonable future the economic stability and expansion of the country, for the greatest benefit of all its citizens. May I repeat at this point, Mr. Speaker, that the first step that was imposed to us was the fight against an inflation which had become a threat to the whole economy. Courage was needed to take that step. But it has not prevented the government from being concerned all the time about the problem of unemployment, particularly in the less developed areas of the country. And this government did not remain indifferent to the daily distress of all of our fellow citizens who have been its victims.

We can rejoice today at seeing that the situation, far from deteriorating further, as it would undoubtedly have

[*Mr. Trudeau.*]

had we not acted as we did, is beginning to be restored. So much so that owing to our incentive programmes to productivity, owing to our assistance programmes to industry in under-developed areas, the commercial situation being favourable, our exports this year reached an unprecedented volume and, next year, we shall experience a new prosperity leading to a marked decrease in unemployment.

The only true prosperity is that which is equitably shared. However elaborate the distribution, it could not be completed or maintained without the help of a tax reform.

In political economy, taxation is the immediate means for equity, the pre-eminent way of serving justice. For, owing to its taxation power, the state is basically a righter of wrongs. In fact, property spontaneously tends toward concentration and not distribution; in ordinary circumstances, the distribution never happens unless compulsion is exercised by public authority and endorsed by a majority of citizens. But prejudice due to uneven distribution of the national wealth changes in the course of time. Therefore, fiscal means should be modified accordingly, so that the balance of contributions might be adjusted as much as possible.

Public reaction to the proposals of the White Paper on tax reform was strong indeed. The purpose of that paper was precisely to prompt public opinion to express itself. On the other hand, a Senate committee and a House of Commons committee, appointed to study the White Paper proposals, have just turned in their reports. These reports, as well as the criticism voiced by the public, will be seriously considered. We are willing to amend certain proposals, those, for instance, that might, after consideration, prove detrimental to our industrial growth. This is what we did in the case of the mining industry.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, the purpose of our action should be kept in mind. During a long debate which answered very well our expectations of an active democracy, several groups and many citizens defended their interests intelligently and vigorously. That is gratifying. It is now up to the government, bearing in mind the general interest of the citizens, to bring before the House some amendments to our tax system, which we feel would achieve the two-fold objective of ensuring a more equitable distribution of the tax burden and a high rate of economic growth, without which our society cannot develop.

• (2:30 p.m.)

[*English*]

A number of ministers will be speaking in this debate, Mr. Speaker, and they will deal in some detail with those areas within their responsibility. For my part this afternoon I should like to touch on only a few further matters. I do so because of the emphasis that the Leader of the Opposition has quite properly given to them. These areas of which I speak are of concern to Canadians and are, to a degree, products of the rapid changes which have been visited upon us in recent years. Some changes are wonderful in their promise; others bring bitterness in their wake. We should not assume, however, the results of change to be preordained. To guarantee beneficial conse-