

*The Address—Mr. Lesage*

I should like to turn now to vital matters which are not mentioned in the speech from the throne. In several of the fields in which we have grave problems what we find is government by postponement. Yes, sir, government by postponement. Instead of facing the issues and defining its own policy, the government calls conferences and appoints royal commissions. What is the policy of the government in the field of trade? It is a policy of conferences. The government has refined this technique to a point where we have conferences called for the specific purpose of organizing another conference. The government is so convinced of the merits of this new technique that it claims a great victory—I am thinking now, of the Minister of Finance—when it has succeeded in making the physical arrangements for another conference.

In the field of trade we know now that this 15 per cent policy is nothing but a monumental bluff. Michael Barkway has been quoted at length in this house by hon. members on this side, but I should like to put on *Hansard* a quotation from an article by Blair Fraser which appeared in the October 26 issue of *Maclean's* magazine. Writing about the attitude of the Minister of Finance at the conference held at Mont Tremblant, he had this to say, and I quote:

Rightly or wrongly, everybody in the room was convinced that the reason he—

The Minister of Finance

—could not talk about Canada's proposals was that Canada had no proposals worth talking about.

And Mr. Fraser concluded his article with the following paragraph:

Like the weavers in the old story of the emperor's new clothes, Fleming and his advisers had been working all summer on the fabric of this great Canadian idea, a commonwealth trade conference. And on the day of the big parade it was not the innocent voice of a child but the bland tones of a chancellor of the exchequer that set off the deadly cry: "The Emperor has no clothes on".

In point of fact, Mr. Speaker, the government is so busy preparing conferences that it has no time to prepare itself for those conferences.

In a more restricted field, what is the attitude of the government with respect to certain tariffs now protecting Canadian industries, such as the tariffs on textiles? The government has no policy, or, rather, it has decided to make a reference to the tariff board so that the board can supply a policy to the government. What about the problem of our economic relations with the United States? Here, again, no policy but a conference, where something or some one was fixed. As to who did the fixing, I believe what happened at the FAO meeting yesterday in Rome is revealing

[Mr. Lesage.]

as to the intentions of the United States government with regard to the protection of Canadian trade.

When the Conservatives were in opposition they used to blame the Liberals for the low level of farm income and the spread between the retail prices of agricultural products and the receipts of farmers. Now that they are in power, what is their policy? Here again, they have no policy or, rather, the government has announced its intention to create a special committee of the house to investigate this problem, and we can infer from the Prime Minister's remarks in this house that once the committee has terminated its study a royal commission, a new Stevens commission, will be appointed to consider the work of the committee. Thus we have conferences to prepare other conferences, and royal commissions to study the reports of parliamentary committees. In the meantime, we have government by postponement. In this way the Conservative party hopes to hide from the Canadian people the fact that on major issues it has no policy.

In the field of energy, here, again, we have heard no policy announced by this government. We all know that the Gordon commission devoted a good deal of attention to this problem and will in its final report make specific recommendations which were anticipated in its preliminary report. Before knowing what will be the final recommendations of the Gordon commission in this respect, the government appoints a royal commission whose main purpose is to make an inquiry on the recommendations of another commission before these recommendations are presented in final form. This is what can be called quick action, but what about the wisdom of the action. Of course, everybody knows why this royal commission on energy was appointed; every one in Canada knows that it is to hide the fact that the Conservative party wants to continue the pipe-line policy initiated by the past Liberal government.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Shame.

Mr. Lesage: Yes, it is true.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Shame.

Mr. Lesage: That is why the royal commission on energy has been appointed. The Conservatives strongly criticized this policy of the past Liberal government and of course they do not dare admit publicly now the fact that they endorse the policy. What they wish to do is hide that policy of theirs behind a royal commission. They do not have