

have been caught in the tightened net. I know it is now thought politically wise to join in the various reactionary backlashes which were evident in some quarters during the campaign, but I want to say to you, Sir, and to members of this House that we in the New Democratic Party refuse to join in the backlash against social welfare and against such essential measures of social security as a humane and generous system of unemployment insurance. We simply will not support any attempt to emasculate our unemployment insurance program. The real problem is the unacceptable level of unemployment. The remedy is not to hound the unemployed; the remedy is to end unemployment.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, we still consider the matter of economic independence crucial for the future of Canada as a distinct entity capable of establishing its own destiny.

One of the main aspects which we envisage in this field is the proposed Mackenzie Valley pipeline project. The bill on foreign ownership was denied adoption by the last Parliament because we felt that that project, considered separately, was a far-fetched way to deal with an urgent problem.

Therefore, we shall await with interest details of those other measures indicated in the Speech from the Throne. Nobody is in a position to estimate their value before their exact nature is known.

I cannot discuss other important aspects of the Speech from the Throne because of the time limit set by the Standing Orders. Some of my colleagues will deal with them later—especially in the field of agriculture—which leads us to believe that the government has finally agreed to decentralize the Department of Regional Economic Expansion, to re-examine that hodgepodge of giveaway programs in the field of research and development, election expenses, the new orientation of federal-provincial relations and the giving up of rigid positions. Those are subjects which we talked about during the election campaign. We are glad to see that the government intends at least to take a few steps in the right direction.

[*English*]

But I cannot resume my seat without congratulating the Prime Minister and his colleagues on their rediscovery of the west. What a thrill of revelation they must have felt! If there is anybody who has doubts about our democratic process, let him note anew the power of the ballot: at the right time, marked the right way, it maketh hearts to feel and eyes to see. Miracle of miracles, as the song goes.

I can tell the Prime Minister that I have spoken to the offices of the three New Democratic Party premiers in the west. They are fully ready to co-operate. The meeting of the Prairie Economic Council to be held in Winnipeg in a couple of months may present an opportunity to begin preparations for the proposed conference, especially since I understand that British Columbia will attend and that the economic council will become a western one rather than merely a prairie one. I cannot speak for them, but I am sure that the western premiers will not be satisfied

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with gestures, any more than we in this chamber would or will be.

Mr. Speaker, what I have been trying to convey to members of this House and, through the press gallery, to the people of Canada is that we in the New Democratic Party ask for solid accomplishments in this parliament. We have reason to believe that our campaign and our position in this House have influenced the content of the Speech from the Throne. This we welcome. There are important proposals in the speech which deserve a chance to be presented in legislation and we believe it would be unreasonable not to provide that chance. This is the reason for the policy which I have enunciated this afternoon and this evening and the policy which I made public the other day. I suggest, again, that it is as important for the Leader of the Opposition and his party to give this government a chance to bring its throne speech into legislation as it is for us, and he should wait patiently before he crosses the aisle—if he does.

As a result of the Prime Minister's speech this afternoon I hope that in the next three days, tomorrow, Wednesday and Thursday, the ministers and members of the government who speak will give us some details of their proposals. Parliament and the people of Canada are entitled to this. The generalities with which the Prime Minister was satisfied this afternoon do not satisfy us, Mr. Speaker. Members of the government have a duty to tell parliament during this debate what the proposals in the Speech from the Throne mean in the various areas I have mentioned and other areas which other people will discuss.

I say, Sir, that all of us were elected to serve the people of Canada, as the Leader of the Opposition said. In his speech he said that he feels this parliament has a great opportunity, that he feels responsible for it and that he hoped this parliament would add to its distinction. I say to him, as I said earlier, that his attitude this afternoon does not add to the distinction of this House nor, indeed, to the distinction of his party.

We in the New Democratic Party believe that whatever the complexion of the government, whether Liberal, as it is now, or Progressive Conservative as it may become at some future date, parliament should function constructively to serve the people of Canada. The government in place should be given a reasonable opportunity by all members of the House to present its program in detail, to present its legislation and its policies. This, Mr. Speaker, is our position, which we believe to be both reasonable and responsible and I am confident that the people of Canada will applaud it.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

• (2030)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Saint-Denis (Mr. Prud'homme) tells me that we are close to the party in power, which is somewhat true.

My first words will be to congratulate Mr. Speaker, as well as his Deputy, on their appointment to the elevated offices of Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons.