

*Supply*

I believe that his arguments from a political point of view were good arguments. I feel there is every reason to believe that it would be in the best interest of the country, in fact, in the best interest of Parliament, if there was a clear starting point for debate and a clear finishing point in which we have dealt with a series of proposals, cleared the decks and can go on to a second series of proposals. I believe that in the interest of Parliament that would be useful. However, I am not going to join the argument that there is in fact a legal requirement to do that. I would have to be persuaded with far more evidence than I have heard to this point that that is so.

I was interested in the reference to the later Lester B. Pearson and his comment that there is no obligation on the part of the Opposition to present alternatives by way of policy to what the Government is doing during sessions of Parliament. I do not happen to agree with it, but if it is true, then there is no doubt in my mind that the Official Opposition has certainly lived up to that. On balance, I think that Parliament would be better if we were to debate both proposals and alternate proposals rather than debating the sorrowful record of the Government on a regular basis.

● (1200)

Let us suppose that there had been Throne Speeches every year since 1980, that in 1981 the Government had come forward with its proposals for 1981, that in 1982 it had come forward with its proposals for 1982 and that this year it had brought forward its proposals for 1983. Is there anyone in the House who believes that it would have told us that it intended to bring forward measures which would have created two million people unemployed? Is there anyone who thinks that it would have told us that it was prepared to bring forward proposals, the result of which would be the highest record of bankruptcy in modern history?

Is there anyone who believes that the Government would have told us, in any of those Throne Speeches, that it was its intention to allow energy prices, oil prices in particular, to rise to a level above the world level? Is there anyone who thinks for a moment that the Government would have proposed in a Throne Speech that its policy objectives in 1980, 1981 or 1982 would have been to allow the process to develop which drove interest rates to usurious levels? Does anyone think for a moment that either this Government or any other Government would have brought forward in a Throne Speech its intention to allow the economy to deteriorate to such a level that we would have plant closings the likes of which we have not seen since the 1930s, probably the likes of which we have not seen in the history of the country?

Would it have told us that the Minister in charge of the Wheat Board would propose cutbacks in the growing of grain, of wheat in particular, at a time when it was about to impose upon the farmers of western Canada the additional burden of the Crow rate changes? Would it have come forward and said to us in a Throne Speech that in its plans for the future it would give Donald Macdonald a royal commission, Peter

Stollery a seat in the Senate and Pitfield a seat beside Stollery?

What I am asking Your Honour is whether, considering all of the very relevant things which have happened to Canadians over the course of the last three years, you think that if the Government had had a Throne Speech every year it would have told us those things? Does Your Honour think it would have said: "This is what we have in mind for the country; we therefore want you to debate the merits of it".

Does anyone think the Government would have asked us to debate the merits of the Sydney coal liquefaction plant and the payments to Mr. Gillespie? Does anyone think it would have asked us for concurrence in the House of Commons to allow Canadair to act in the way in which it has in fact acted over the course of the last year? Let us face it, what would the Throne Speech have told us? There is no point in our crying for a Throne Speech on the basis that the Government's obligation to inform the public of its programs is one which we in the House of Commons believe it should live up to if, with the benefit of both hindsight and knowledge, we are convinced that the Government would never have told us what it would do anyway. We must consider all of the major events which have occurred in the course of the last three years which have been so devastating to large numbers of Canadians in every part of the country.

I ask the Government Whip, who is watching me with interest, does he think that if there had been Throne Speeches the Government would have told us that those were things it intended to do? I suspect not. I wonder if the Government would have been prepared to come into my community and say to the people who live there that one of its plans was to create a situation within the economy which would cause the Steel Company of Canada to lay workers off by the thousands, with Dofasco similarly laying workers off by the thousands, the International Harvester Company on the verge of closing, with any number of other plants faced with the same kind of non-future, with all of the people affected facing the same kinds of problems. I do not think so. Therefore, while I would argue that it would be nice to know what the Government intends for the country, it would also be nice to feel that what it would tell us would bear some semblance of truth and accuracy.

I suspect, looking back over many Throne Speeches, that we in the House of Commons and the Canadian public do not have much chance of being told, by way of a Throne Speech every year, of the disastrous policy which the Government proposes to thrust upon us. I think anyone who believes that that would happen is obviously not in tune with the political realities of Canada and certainly not in tune with the political realities of the House of Commons. I admit that there is merit in requesting that the Government tell us in advance what it will be doing, but I think that more important than that is to consider whether, when it does bring forward its proposals, they are of value, whether they work, and whether they address the real problems of Canada.