

willing to co-operate, he has given no indication of any enthusiasm for my help.

On a happier note, I would like him to know that the official Opposition wishes him all that he has ever wished for—the best. We are very happy to see him looking so healthy, vigorous and young. Like Jack Benny, he never seems to get any greyer.

[Translation]

Honourable senators, last Thursday we had the pleasure of hearing the remarkable speech of our new colleague, Senator Louis Robichaud. We could not expect less in his case. His reputation had preceded him in this house.

His career in the New Brunswick Legislature and the fact that he held the position of provincial premier in Fredericton for ten years are proof of his qualifications and assure us that his presence will be very useful during our deliberations.

I congratulate Senator Robichaud on the manner in which he acquitted himself of the relatively thankless task of mover of the Address. This speech will probably be only the first of several excellent ones and we shall look forward to hearing him again.

[English]

Senator Perrault's speech, seconding Senator Robichaud's motion for adoption of the Speech from the Throne, demonstrated amply well how conversant he is with the many and complex problems confronting this country. But his speech simultaneously revealed his Achilles' heel. He can identify problems well enough, and he sees most of their ramifications. It is in the area of solutions that I detected a certain rather significant weakness. The senator is obviously of the opinion that unless solutions flow from the collective genius of the Liberal Party's pseudo-intelligentsia, they have no value.

Honourable senators, how many of you remember last year's Speech from the Throne? How many of you can remember, without scowling, the government's eloquent resolve: its determination to see inflation controlled; the rise in the cost of living arrested; unemployment reduced.

This year's Throne Speech does not differ substantially from last year's. And if the same old, tired and overworked promises, the leftovers, have to be reheated and served up to us again, it indicates that nothing much was accomplished by Parliament in the last session. But we did not need that kind of proof. The facts of life are proof enough. The cost of living is higher now than it ever was. Unemployment has certainly not diminished. And though social benefits may have been increased, there is very little more in the pockets of the needy. Their lot has not been significantly improved since last year. They are still the helpless victims of a skyrocketing inflation rate, and no amount of fancy Throne Speech verbiage ever has or ever will change that fact.

Canadians are angry and bitter. They are taking an economic beating and there seems to be nothing they can do to defend themselves. They turn to the federal government for solace, but find none. The whole country seems to have lost its sense of order and purpose.

What happened? Why was this government's performance so poor in the last session? The answer is easy. The administration was mainly preoccupied with maintaining

itself in power. Fear of being removed from office prevented this government from acting boldly and courageously. It is sad and pitiful, but nevertheless true: this government does not have the courage of its convictions, or has no convictions at all. It was satisfied during the last session to accept any view as long as it served to guarantee its continuance in office.

Let me give you a few examples of how this government has prostituted whatever principles it had. Let me show you how it has, with incredible cowardice, refused to lead this country.

In the field of social security, Bill C-147, which was passed in May of last year, increased the old age security pension to \$100 a month. It also included a cost of living adjustment which was to be computed on an annual basis. This indexing of the increase to the cost of living was itself a retreat from the 1972 position of this government. In 1972, you will recall, they had refused to allow old age security pensions to increase more than 2 per cent per annum. Normally, Bill C-147 should have been the only bill concerning the old age security pension in the first session of this Parliament. But, threatened by the loss of NDP support, the government presented a second bill on this subject last September.

● (2020)

With Bill C-219, the government said that the indexing of old age security pension increases should be done on a quarterly basis. Indexing on a quarterly basis was an idea first suggested by the Leader of the Opposition in the other place, but, when he suggested it in May of last year, the government labelled the idea silly, too complicated, impossible to administer. Then, in September, they adopted it as their own. Their action was obviously borne of the instinct for survival.

The last session also saw introduced two bills on family allowances. The government had indicated that it was going to bring about a new system of family allowances beginning on January 1 of this year. Yet, in September, again because it felt a threat to its continued existence as a government, the Trudeau administration brought in an interim measure increasing the family allowance to a flat \$12 per month, pending the passage of Bill C-211.

Honourable senators will surely recall other instances when the government indulged in some unprincipled about-faces for the sole purpose of maintaining itself in power.

Bill C-192 provided for a reduction in income tax payable by corporations involved in manufacturing and processing activities. Because of NDP objections and Conservative reservations with respect to corporate tax reductions, the government agreed to include a provision whereby 60 members of the other place could force the government to bring in a measure to meet the conclusion of any resolution voted by that house.

Think of it, honourable senators: the government was agreeing, in advance, to bring in and support legislation to which it was opposed. Moreover, it was doing so in the area of fiscal legislation which is the prerogative of the government, and the government alone. This was a unique example of spineless capitulation; another sad example of chronic weakness and lack of direction. It was a most