

Speech from the Throne

Mr. Jamieson: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. gentlemen are as confident as they say they are, that after the next election they will be over here, they should be listening and getting used to it, because if that is the case that is what I will be telling them then. Is that all right? Let me repeat this gem: There should have been some proposal to draw Canadians together in the fight against inflation and, in particular, some clarification of the role of the Prices and Incomes Commission.

As I say, is the suggestion that the role of the Prices and Incomes Commission should be changed drastically? If it is, surely it is not unreasonable to say to the Leader of the Opposition—

Mr. Bigg: Tell us about transportation.

Mr. Jamieson: I will tell you about transportation. I would like to put you on your horse and send you out of here.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jamieson: On second thought, maybe I got the horse wrong.

Mr. Nesbitt: Now who is getting under whose skin?

Mr. Jamieson: The point is, Mr. Speaker, that it is impossible for the opposition to leave a comment like this standing without indicating whether they have plans, presumably, for the retention of the Prices and Incomes Commission. Are they going to have some form of enforced wage and price controls? If they are, the country and this House has the right to know, rather than leaving it in limbo. Incidentally, the only other support that is given to that particular sentence—and imagine this in a Tory Throne Speech—says:
We should be fighting hard now to get some guidelines accepted in fighting inflation.

This is from a party that has consistently and without exception said that guidelines will not work. I can quote from many speeches of members opposite asking when the government is going to give up the folly of guidelines. Now they are suggesting that this is the solution. Again I have to ask, Mr. Speaker, are these the guidelines that are going to be enforced, or is this to be some kind of voluntary exercise of the sort that hon. members say is meaningless and ineffective?

I should like to come now to—

Mr. MacInnis: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): The hon. member for Cape Breton-East Richmond (Mr. MacInnis) on a point of order.

Mr. MacInnis: My point of order arises from the statement made by the minister. He said he was prepared to quote, and the question arises: Who is he going to quote and what is he going to quote? Let's hear it.

Mr. Jamieson: Mr. Speaker, if I had a little time I am sure I would be able to find—

An hon. Member: We will give you all the time you want.

Mr. Jamieson: What I said, Mr. Speaker, is a matter of record and I think it can be supported—that indeed many

members of the party opposite have indicated that the voluntary guidelines exercise is not a workable solution to the inflation problem. In fact, it has been an almost basic tenet of their arguments over the last four years.

Mr. Speaker, in fairness to the Leader of the Opposition, toward the end of his speech he did recognize that there was necessity for him to make some comments about policy and to assert some leadership. I will say that in reading his speech I noticed that he added a new wrinkle to the old, so-called confrontation politics; that is, there are occasions when he comes down squarely on both sides of an issue. This is what is known as the "sweet reasonableness approach": you do not really take a stand until you have had an opportunity to weigh public opinion and get some idea of how the cat of public opinion is going to jump. So we have various references to this, and, on the other hand, that.

He says during his speech that many of the points he makes with regard to policy will be elaborated by those coming after. I searched and found nothing in the way of elaboration or policy declaration that followed. For example, on a matter that is of great concern to me—Newfoundland—he said one line, and one line only in the whole speech:

—more effective measures to ensure the conservation of our fisheries.

Nobody disputes that. But what kind of measures does the leader of that party suggest; and would they be prepared to support the kind of unilateral action that is being recommended by certain members of the party, a kind of gunboat diplomacy? Are they in fact prepared to assert unilateral control over the continental shelf? Is this the policy? If it is, we have a right to know. In fact, not only do we have a right to know, but that kind of discussion in this House would be useful because this is one of the most complex of subjects.

If the Leader of the Opposition is prepared to assert, as a matter of policy, that regardless of international agreements, regardless of treaties, regardless of international law, we propose to move unilaterally in that direction, then I say it is his obligation to spell that out and not simply to have it quoted as a possibility or even a faint hope by some of his followers.

Finally comes a ringing declaration. This has got to be the most inane sentence I have ever read, standing by itself. He said:

Our industries in Canada must be put in a position to compete.

Now, what industries? And compete with whom, and under what circumstances? Tonight I do not propose, despite what hon. gentlemen have said, to talk about transportation, to go into it in detail because there will be an opportunity during the debate on the Canadian National—

An hon. Member: Don't talk about it. You don't know.

Mr. Jamieson: Do you want an answer? Would you like to take the floor? I would be happy to give you the floor.

Some hon. Members: No, no.

An hon. Member: Careful about that one, Don.