

The Address—Mr. Rompkey

many years, so he can appreciate the problems he has left us with.

The same thing goes for other Members from the Montreal region. I heard a few who kept saying that the Speech from the Throne had a new and worthwhile approach and that we ought to steer in the direction indicated.

The issue of universality is one which, I believe, people understand quite well in the sense that they know it has to be debated, that such a debate is not necessarily a new step but rather part of the normal evolution or review of the system which should have occurred perhaps a few years ago, instead of just allowing the country to sink into a total indebtedness of more than \$190 billion.

People agree, I think, not so much that the less fortunate should have less money, but that there should be a redistribution which is more equitable and more in line with the country's aspirations.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support this motion calling upon the House to concur in the Speech from the Throne, as it incorporates all the principles for which I have been fighting for the past 20 years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there questions or comments on the speech of the Hon. Member?

[*English*]

If not, we shall resume debate.

Hon. William Rompkey (Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to participate in this debate. I would like, first of all, to congratulate you, Sir, on the position you hold. I would like to congratulate as well all those who hold office. I may say that so far the House has witnessed the toughness, the firmness and yet the sensibility with which you have governed. We appreciate that. I would also like to congratulate the mover and seconder on their addresses in reply to the Speech from the Throne and, indeed, all Hon. Members who have participated in this debate, particularly those who have addressed the House for the first time.

I want to thank those who have seen fit to elect me to this House for the fifth time, Mr. Speaker, and to tell them that I appreciate the confidence they have shown in me. I will certainly do my best to see that I serve them to the best of my ability, as I have in the past.

I would like to direct some comments to the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker, as well as to the economic statement which followed it. The central message seems to be that private enterprise is the engine of the economy and that it must be put front and centre. I have no quarrel with that particular philosophy. Second, and more specifically, it is said that the deficit must be reduced. Again, I have no quarrel in principle with that particular philosophy. However, it is the application which bothers me, Mr. Speaker. I believe the question is; if that is the direction in which the Government wants to move, is it moving in that direction in an evenhanded and fair way? From what I have seen, Mr. Speaker, of the effects of the

Throne Speech and of the economic statement, it seems to me that the people in Atlantic Canada and in my riding will be particularly hard hit by certain economic measures. I would like to point out what they are.

Bear in mind, Mr. Speaker, that the province from which I come has the highest unemployment rate in the country and the highest cost of living. Historically we have been heavily dependent on transfer payments. Over \$200 million a year goes into the Newfoundland economy by way of unemployment insurance. That is the second largest contributor to the provincial economy. I point that out, Mr. Speaker, not because I am proud of the fact, and not because I am satisfied with that situation. I point that out to indicate that sudden and massive change in transfer payments, in unemployment insurance, is going to have a negative effect on the economy of our province.

• (1630)

In the economic statement we were told that the Government was going to increase premiums, which indeed is a raise in taxes. At the same time people would be cut off the rolls and benefits would be cut. The reason given by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) for that situation was that people did not look hard enough for jobs. That is the interpretation of what he said. Therefore, he is cutting down on unemployment insurance.

I would like to tell the Minister of Finance and the other people on that side of the House that there are 8,000 Newfoundlanders in Fort McMurray, Alberta, who went there to look for jobs. They are in Faro in the Yukon, they are in Thompson, and they are even in Tuktoyaktuk. How far do we have to go to look for jobs, Mr. Speaker? Do we have to swim the Pacific to Japan to look for jobs? What must we do to prove to the Minister of Finance and the Government that Newfoundlanders really do want work? The reason given by the Minister of Finance for changing the unemployment insurance system is that people were not looking hard enough for jobs. In my province at the present time there are no alternatives and people are doing their best. They go anywhere in this country where they can find employment. I know that the Minister of Finance is a fair and honourable man. I just think that he does not quite understand the situation in that province and in the Atlantic area generally.

The Minister assumes that the private sector will create those jobs if the safety net that we have created for unemployed people is changed in some way. What is the evidence of that and what is the motivation? We have had tax breaks in the Atlantic provinces before. In spite of the programs that we have had in the past we have had difficulty attracting capital and creating those jobs. No one was more diligent in that than this Party when we formed the Government of Canada. A constant, considered, important and paramount plank in our platform was always regional development. It seems to me that we have somehow lost sight of that objective.