

[Translation]

Honourable senators, when I was appointed to the Senate, I had decided to wait for two or three months before saying one single word in this chamber. However, I was unable to refuse the invitation of the Government Leader in the Senate, Senator Martin, who asked me to move the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne. I have just performed my duty. I wish to thank you all, honourable senators.

I am pleased to move that the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne be concurred in.

[English]

**Hon. Raymond J. Perrault:** Honourable senators, it is a privilege to be accorded the opportunity to second the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne. I use the word "privilege" with good reason, because I have known the mover of the Address for a great many years. He has been a good friend; he has made a distinguished contribution to public life in this country, and his appointment to this body is an event which can only redound to the benefit of all Canadians.

[Translation]

Honourable senators, it is a very special pleasure for me to take part in this debate today with my old friend and colleague, Honourable Louis Robichaud.

Having been born and raised in British Columbia, the large Western bilingual province—and I mean English and Chinese, of course—I do not have the same ability as Senator Robichaud in the other official language of Canada. Therefore I am sure you will excuse me, honourable senators, for delivering my speech in one language only.

[English]

A few days ago I visited Senator Robichaud's great and historic province, New Brunswick. We were on the same platform together in Moncton. I noted then something which it may be appropriate to note on this occasion, that down through the years thousands of New Brunswickers, thousands of Maritimers, have made the happy decision—at least for British Columbia—to come to our West Coast province and work with us to build our province. There they continue to make a distinguished contribution.

One need only review the birthplaces of many of British Columbia's and Canada's distinguished jurists, educators, business people, professional people and others to be convinced once again of the valuable contribution of the Maritime provinces to Confederation. As a British Columbian, I salute them. Members of Parliament—whether they serve in the Senate or in the other place—are particularly fortunate, because in the course of their duties and responsibilities they are accorded many opportunities to meet Canadians from all the provinces and territories. They are accorded the privilege of assessing the length and breadth of Canada, and its grandeur, possibilities and potential.

In the Confederation Debates of February 1865, George Brown described my home province as "British Columbia, the land of golden opportunities." But only small-minded people believe that their region or their province possesses some kind of special monopoly on scenic beauty, industrious and talented people, resource potential, or even virtue.

Like other honourable senators, I have travelled the length and breadth of Canada, from British Columbia to Newfoundland and the Yukon. It is a magnificent country, greatly privileged among the nations of the world.

Undoubtedly in Canada we have many problems, which will be elucidated in exquisite detail by the members of Her Majesty's loyal Opposition in this and the other place in the days to come. Some of these problems do not lend themselves to easy solutions, but when we compare Canadian problems with the critical life-and-death issues confronting three-quarters of the world's population, then we must regard ourselves as being singularly blessed and we must be profoundly grateful.

It was Winston Churchill, I think, who said that the parliamentary system is the most inefficient and ineffective governmental system in the world, with the exception of every other. As we look around the world, and at the traumatic political events which are occurring not only abroad but among our dear and closest neighbours on this continent, I believe that we see dramatized once again the inherent strengths of our parliamentary system. So we have a good deal to be grateful for.

Honourable senators, the Speech from the Throne reflects the concern of the government about the problems of Canadians, particularly the problem of inflation or rapid price escalation. When Canadians—particularly "unorganized" Canadians, those who have no economic heft or weight—must pay prices rising by 10 per cent or more every year without end, when the man who takes less out of society than he puts in is chosen, as one writer says, "to be the sucker and burnt offering on the altar of official gods," it is time for governments to act.

So we have in the Throne Speech a number of measures designed to mitigate the effects of inflation, insofar as it is possible, especially in relation to those in a more vulnerable economic position.

It is all too easy for the Opposition to criticize the efforts of the government in this area. I note a cynical chuckle from the other side of the house. The fact is that a worldwide shortage of commodities has created serious price inflation everywhere. Despite their distressing nature, the effects of inflation in Canada have been less onerous than in most other countries. While Canadian prices have increased less than those in most other industrialized countries, they have most certainly exceeded the recent experience in Canada, and Canadians are not satisfied.

As honourable senators are aware, inflation of costs and prices reflects the scarcity of many industrial materials caused by rapid economic growth proceeding almost simultaneously in most of the major industrialized nations. In addition—and I cite these problems not by way of offering excuses, but by way of setting forth the facts as they exist—temporary world scarcities of feed grains and food products have arisen while crop failures in some major producing countries have coincided with rising consumer demand. Major currency realignments have contributed to rising prices of imports into Canada. Of course, we are all acutely aware of the rising cost of petroleum and the effect this has had on Canadian economic development.