

*The Address—Mr. Coldwell*

The Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) took a great deal of comfort from the article in the *London Times*. I want to say to the government that the progress of Canada has been unquestioned ever since the war broke out. Prior to the war the same government was in power. No one can say that in those years from 1935 to 1938, at least until we began rearmament, there were any signs of progress in this country. Indeed, we continued in the slough of despondency in which we were when the Liberal party took power in 1935. It was preparation for war and our very favourable geographical position that enabled such an article to be written about the government. I am not detracting at all from the tremendous progress that has been made in this country over the last ten or more years. I only hope that progress will be continued.

A few moments ago the Prime Minister gave a rather strange definition of free enterprise. As I understood him, he said free enterprise enabled everyone to follow his own devices provided he did not do anything that interfered with the rights of others. That is not free enterprise. Our statute books are cluttered with legislation preventing individuals from following their own devices. We have had to limit individuals. As for the inference that democratic socialists are in favour of restricting individual liberty, look at the record. The legislation that has been placed on the statute books of all the democratic countries guaranteeing the social rights of individuals and social justice for individuals was placed there, not always by socialist governments of course, but at the insistence of men and women who followed socialist philosophy.

In this house between 1921 and 1942, until he was removed by death from his seat in this house, who was it who brought the wrongs of the Canadian people to the floor of this parliament, and fought for the rights of the individual and for social justice? It was a predecessor of mine as leader of this group in the house, the late J. S. Woodsworth. I want to say that I hope we shall continue to struggle in that same tradition and after the same pattern we followed at that time.

I want to join in the criticism of the government for not having called parliament together earlier. The Prime Minister has said that now a great deal of legislation is ready, and that debate may be limited because we know what we are going to do in this session of parliament. I do not think that is any answer. If we had met in November, legislation might have been ready and we might have been informed as to what that legislation would be. Last autumn there were

problems in this country which needed the attention of parliament, and not the attention of the government only. I might name two of them, the decline in farm income—let me say at once, not due to the bad crop in western Canada because that crop has not yet entered into the picture so far as marketing is concerned—and the grave concern about mounting unemployment. Earlier in the year when we dared to say that this winter we were going to be faced with a larger job-seeking list than we had a year ago, we were told that was very unlikely. But we have found that unemployment has mounted.

A third matter which should have been discussed in this parliament in the autumn was the international situation. I am not going to discuss that international situation today, Mr. Speaker, because I understand the protocol relating to NATO will be introduced, as well as other agreements. We shall have an opportunity then of hearing the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Pearson) explain the protocol and the agreements, and we shall have an opportunity of discussing those agreements on their merits at that time. I shall not deal with those now.

Before I make any criticisms I want to say that there are some welcome announcements in the speech. I am very happy to learn that at this session some further provision will be made for improvement in the War Veterans Allowance Act. I think that is overdue, as I am sure many members of this house do.

Again, I am not going to take credit for this party or give it to that party; but I say there are hon. gentlemen in their seats in all parts of the house who will be very happy to see this piece of legislation brought down, because from all quarters of the house it has been advocated from time to time.

Then, of course, something in which I have always been particularly interested is the welfare of the blind. Personally I am glad, and of course as a party we are glad—and I presume this feeling is shared by hon. members in all parts of the house—to know that the age of eligibility for the receipt of blind pensions is to be lowered, and the ceiling raised.

Of course we agree with the statement in the speech from the throne that the bringing into operation in this country a great humanitarian measure. Unfortunately the government discovered that this was a great humanitarian measure long after we thought the discovery should have been made. We have felt that the act should have been brought in much earlier.

As we shall indicate by our votes on the amendment, we are disappointed—and I shall