

*The Address—Mr. Johnston*

during the campaign. He was able to see its beauty at firsthand. I am sure he would remember the morning when we crossed the flooding St. Mary's River to attend a great rally at Cranbrook. At that time things seemed to be looking very bright for this party. I suppose we should have perceived that the water in the river was muddy and that it was a Liberal tide that was swelling, but that observation did not come to us until somewhat later.

This is a constituency which reaches from south of Vernon all the way around through Rogers Pass, that beautiful highway, then south through the Kootenay Valley, on to the United States border, and then back over almost to Creston and on to the Crowsnest.

One delight in campaigning through that constituency is its great physical beauty. I found that no matter how exhausted I might be on reaching the town of Golden and proceeding south, the beauties and wonders of the Kootenay River Valley always provided an amazing lift that buoyed me up through the various campaigns.

Yet, in spite of all that beauty there are problems that are with us still in spite of the election. One gathers that they will be with us for a long time. I think principally of the problem of inflation which is at the root of many of the other things that trouble this constituency and this country. There is industrial strife in the constituency. There are people out on strike at the present time. They are on strike because they feel wage settlements have not been keeping up with inflation, and they have not been, Mr. Speaker. This is a severe problem.

There are cities which would like to go ahead with development but find the cost excessive. There are farmers who are very concerned about the falling price of beef and the rising price of everything they must buy for their operations. They know the significance of inflation in this land.

There are mills throughout the constituency and in the province that are closed down or are laying off workers in great numbers because of the falling prices of lumber. Lumber prices are falling because inflation has not allowed the Canadian people to build the houses they would like to build.

There is a crisis in municipal affairs throughout the land. Various spokesmen have urged that the municipalities be given a greater share of the tax resources which, in a sense, would make them a little more independent of the whims of federal or provincial governments. I sympathize entirely with this view. It has been presented most recently by Mayor Fleming of Vernon, who himself was a member of this parliament some years ago.

There are urgent problems such as flood control, for example, which is enormously expensive. Anyone during the campaign who watched part of the town of Golden going under water would realize how close to the hearts of the people is the question of flood control. Yet, projects are delayed and postponed because of the expense. I realize there is not a great federal role in that area until disaster strikes, but it does seem to me it would be significantly important to have intervention prior to a disaster when we know, through studies and reports, what is essential to prevent that sort of flooding.

[Mr. Johnston.]

In the beautiful Okanagan Valley we will have a problem with weed control in the lakes throughout the south central area of British Columbia. In some ways this is a very local affair, important to the regional district. It is also a provincial affair, but I submit that anything as beautiful as that valley is also a national asset. One would feel again that there is, and must be, a role for the federal government in tackling a problem of that kind.

The constituency I represent also contains a variety of national parks. I wish the minister responsible for national parks were here this afternoon. I shall be making representations to him as the weeks go along. One would believe of anything as beautiful as a national park in British Columbia that living there, or nearby, would reflect some of the qualities of living in paradise. But one finds, travelling through those regions, that there are particular problems for the people who are living in or near national parks.

I urge that the federal government, which establishes and controls those parks, should have an open and generous policy to remedy the anomalous situation of people living among marvellous scenery and natural beauty, and who find themselves frustrated and almost in despair because of the slowness of action taken on a variety of problems within the jurisdiction of the federal government.

The question of redistribution was mentioned in the Speech from the Throne. This is a subject which concerns my constituency very much. The name of the constituency derives from different languages. The Okanagan part is interior Salish, a part of the great Salish language group of British Columbia. The Kootenay part comes from the extrusion of the plains people across the Rocky Mountains of British Columbia. The constituency itself today still bears some of that remarkable diversity suggested by its very name.

At the time I appeared before the redistribution committee in respect of its proposal to set up this constituency I referred to this matter, and the hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) rose then to ask whether I would explain. At that point I did not take the time to explain, but this was what I meant. It is a difficult constituency to serve and I should like to pay tribute to the previous member, Mr. Douglas Stewart, its representative for six years, who retired.

● (1820)

We have lost, and we continue to lose too many people from British Columbia who have struggled with the problems of representing such vast areas, particularly considering the remuneration they receive compared with what they could receive in other professions or occupations in British Columbia. They struggle with the problem of travelling in winter throughout a very extended constituency. I sympathize with anybody from that province who has a young family and who endeavours to serve in this House, because the problems are very great. One of the things that redistribution could do, and I trust will do, is give to the province of British Columbia a more equitable representation than it has at present.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!