

The Address—Mr. Wright

Speech. Canada has the second highest unemployment rate of any major industrialized nation. At the time of the April 1980 Throne Speech the unemployment rate was 7.7 per cent. Today it is 11.2 per cent. Manufacturing was only at 71 per cent of capacity in the fall of 1983. In real terms, farm incomes in 1982 were 22 per cent lower than in 1979. Thirty-one thousand businesses have declared bankruptcy since the last Throne Speech. Mr. Speaker, this country has been ravaged by this Government in an economic sense. Yet it still persists in telling us what a great job it has done. What did it promise in the last Throne Speech? I would like to quote from the last Throne Speech. It said the Liberals will:

—protect those Canadians most affected by unacceptably high interest rates. My Government will act to assist those unable to bear the burden of renegotiating their home mortgages in the present abnormal situation so that the spectre of foreclosure will be avoided.

Tens of thousands of Canadians lost their homes and several provinces were forced to bring in mortgage assistance programs after the rates went as high as 22 per cent. Approximately 17,000 homeowners were assisted with an average of \$2,000 per homeowner. It goes on:

One of the essential objectives of this government is to put more people to work. Young people, women, natives, and the handicapped face special problems in finding jobs.

It goes on to say:

There will be an increased effort to develop critical trade skills so as to better prepare today's labour force for tomorrow's jobs.

Youth unemployment went from 13.6 per cent to 18.5 per cent. Unemployment generally went from 7.7 per cent to 11.2 per cent at present. That is the way they promise things to Canadians in the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker. They went on to talk about energy and how much they had done for energy in Canada. The Government said it would not impose an 18 cent increase in excise tax on transportation fuel. It said there would be a made in Canada price. Gasoline prices are a dollar higher than they were in 1980. Heating fuel has doubled. Yet if one travels south to the United States one finds gas is 60 cents a gallon cheaper. The Throne Speech goes on to say:

Energy policy is as important for Canada in the 1980s as railway policy was in the 1880s.

Since the last Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, half the drilling rigs in western Canada have been idle or have left the country. The Canadian Drilling Association has estimated that in the first 150 days following the NEP, 35,000 jobs were lost. The Throne Speech of 1980 goes on to say:

—we remain partially dependent upon imported oil. My government is determined to reduce that dependence by promoting conservation and by stimulating the production of new domestic energy supplies.

What has happened is that \$17 billion has left this country, Mr. Speaker. This has resulted in a direct loss of 409,000 jobs. Production of oil in this country has been reduced by 277,000 barrels a day. An internal federal Government report now says that oil imports will rise from 25 per cent of total supply today to 33 per cent in 1987. So much for the Government's promises.

In the 1980 Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, the Government went on to promise:

It is the intention of my Ministers to continue the policies of expenditure restraint and improved government administration—

● (1750)

What has happened? Federal spending has risen from \$62.9 billion in 1980-81 to \$102 billion in the 1983-84 year. This year, Government spending will equal \$9,300 per taxpayer compared with only \$1,700 per taxpayer in 1967-68. Out of every \$3 of tax expenditure, \$1 will go to service the national debt.

The Government went on to explain what it would do for farmers. It said,

Farmers and small businessmen are also hit especially hard by rising costs and my Government is sensitive to their plight.

How sensitive was the Government when 80,000 small businesses closed their doors in 1982 alone? Between 1981 and 1983, 750,000 jobs were lost in the small and medium business sectors. In 1980, 877 farmers formally declared bankruptcy, the year of the Speech from the Throne. This Government has an abysmal record.

In his speech on December 9, 1983, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) referred to Liberals who were asking themselves if they could withstand the awesome threat of a rejuvenated Conservative Party. He claimed that he had good news for the Liberals; that the Tories were still opposing Liberal policies. How true that is. We will continue to oppose those Liberal policies. Let me say to the Prime Minister that he is like a worm on a hook. We will not let him off that hook until the people of Canada have received their just due. In other words, we will feed the Prime Minister to the people of Canada so that they may have their day.

The Prime Minister has said that Progressive Conservatives are always against Liberal policies, including the economy and the Constitution. I recall the constitutional debate in 1980 when we said that the economy was declining and should be discussed instead of the Constitution. But the Prime Minister ignored us. We said that many people in the country did not wish to deal in metric, yet the Prime Minister and his Government insisted on forcing metric on the Canadian people.

When we told the Prime Minister and the Liberal Government in 1980 that interest rates were climbing and the Canadian people could not stand it, he talked about the Constitution. Conservative Members will recall when we brought amendments and suggestions to the committees, Liberal Members would come into the committees in order to vote against our amendments. Yet they insist on standing up and asking for our ideas. Our ideas are put forward in committees where we can make suggestions and amendments to Liberal policies. But they vote them down each time.

In his December 9 speech, the Prime Minister spent much time talking about what Tories believe in. For example, he said that 65 per cent of the Tories at a 1982 policy conference were against increased aid to Third World countries. In fact, 41 per cent of the Tory delegates said that they were in favour of the