

● (1420)

[English]

Mr. Bill Wightman (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Labour): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me so early after the speeches by the Prime Minister (Mr. Clark), the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Trudeau) and the Leader of the New Democratic Party. I am grateful, albeit a little awed, to follow those distinguished parliamentarians. May I also thank the Prime Minister for his expression of confidence in naming me Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour.

Some weeks ago, Mr. Speaker, I took the opportunity to tell you in a personal way how, as a member of the televiewing audience, I had come to admire the manner in which you perceived and discharged your responsibilities as Speaker of the previous Parliament. Today, as a new and untried member of Parliament, I am pleased to have this opportunity to express those same sentiments both formally and publicly.

The tenor of your opening remarks reflected the kind consideration extended to new members by all members of the House of Commons staff, and however long any of us are permitted to serve here I trust we will never forget the importance of the role played by those good people.

You have reminded us in the House of your dependency on the good will and support of all members. I would want my first undertaking as a parliamentarian to be in the form of an assurance to you that I will endeavour to meet the standards you have outlined. Should I falter I have no doubt that you will correct me, and I only hope that any faltering on my part will not belie my fundamental respect for all members of this House. Neophyte that I am, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that the mutual respect we must have for one another in this House flows from the fact that, regardless of political affiliation, we have a strong common bond drawn from the fact that each of us is privileged to represent a constituency of fine people whom God has blessed with Canadian citizenship or Canadian residency.

Perhaps those outside Canada would wonder why we are loath to refer to anyone as a "typical Canadian". As Canadians speaking one to another our reluctance needs no verbalization, because to be a Canadian is to be aware of the wondrous diversity of this land and of our quiet pride in it. The concept of *mon pays* and, indeed, *notre pays*, is central to what differentiates us from the rest of the world.

I was pleased by the manner in which the throne speech made reference to the many communities in Canada. The prior concerns of the people of Scarborough West are for their homes and families, and rightfully so, for the home and family constitute the basic building block of any society. It is understandable, too, that their next concern should be for the immediate community, for it is in that context that most of the day to day relationships with others are experienced. However, sir, let no one misguidedly think that the people I represent lack a sense of that larger community which is Canada, and let

The Address—Mr. Wightman

no one be mistaken as to their love for Canada and all of its citizens.

That underlying love and concern for the nation always comes through in my conversations with the people of Scarborough West, irrespective of the issues we may be discussing or the mood of that discussion. The issue may seemingly be local, such as with railway grade separation, but the underlying concern is for the safety of our children. The issue may be the erosion of the Scarborough bluffs, which also is seemingly local, but the concern is for the preservation of the natural beauty of this country as well as for the very real threat that is posed to the homes of some of our people.

In Scarborough West the idea of government encouraging individuals to decide for themselves the direction their lives should take is welcomed, as are the attempts by the federal government to create an environment which is most appropriate to the achievement of those goals. If it be dogmatic to hold to the belief that this is the proper function of government, then so be it. Put me down as a dogmatist.

Let me for a moment, if I may, relate the concepts of the less pervasive role for government and of enabling people to realize their own aspirations, and let me relate those concepts to the field of labour-management relations.

Incidentally, Mr. Speaker, I was surprised yesterday when the Leader of the New Democratic Party concluded a 40-minute address without having made reference to the Canadian Labour Congress or the Public Service Alliance of Canada from which his party draws heavily for its financial support. Nor do I recall specific reference to the working people of Canada, who comprise a constituency for whom he sometimes purports to be the sole spokesman.

Before my entry into politics I had the intense satisfaction of working co-operatively with the president of the Canadian Labour Congress, the executive committee of the congress, and the executive council of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association in an effort to identify some of the areas wherein representatives of organized labour and management could find agreement. Everyone involved in the exercise took a realistic attitude born out of personal experience. We were under no illusions as to how much we could expect to accomplish. By the same token we were convinced it was in the national interest for us to put aside temporarily those issues wherein agreement was unlikely to be found and, instead, focus our attention and energies on those issues, or portions of issues, where agreement was likely. It was our hope that we might assist the Government of Canada in its policy-making decisions by identifying for the government these areas of common ground.

● (1430)

The result of that effort was a submission to the then prime minister of Canada, now the Leader of the Opposition, signed jointly by the presidents of those two organizations. To our knowledge it was the first time in the history of the CLC and the CMA that a joint submission was made to the Government of Canada. The points made in that submission might have seemed unimportant or insignificant to some, but they were of