

The Address—Mr. Stevens

Canadians, limit government spending, and we can all enjoy less taxation in this country.

Before this evening our economy was virtually standing still with at least one fifth of our productive capacity sitting idle. Having heard the minister's speech I would suggest that we are still facing that kind of stagnation. Before this evening our dollar had plunged to 90 cents because the world had lost confidence in the government. Having heard the minister's speech, we doubt if that confidence will be renewed tomorrow. In short, only the face of this ministry has changed in the person of the new minister. We have had ten years of economic mismanagement and the government apparently does not learn quickly. In short, it is a government which has systematically demonstrated that it is incapable of managing the Canadian economy.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stevens: You will recall that only yesterday the Prime Minister started to change like a chameleon. Now that his spending spree has caused such harm in the country, we find that the Prime Minister is starting to run with the hounds after having run with the hares. He certainly tells us, you will recall, that we must now be disciplined, that we have grown too soft. But he scarcely glances at his own government's lack of discipline. Now he tells us that the goals that we rightly thought attainable in this country—and I suggest most members of the House would agree—are now unattainable. He tells us that our expectations are too high. Imagine, our per capita average income when he took power was second in the world and now it has fallen to tenth, and he tells us that our expectations are too high. Just guess who is ninth? Luxembourg!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Stevens: In view of his new demand for harsh discipline I would like to remind the Prime Minister of a statement he made at the Ottawa Canadian Club in 1972. Probably he does not like to be reminded of this, but I will quote him: He said:

Well, this tremendous growth which is within our grasp is really fantastic. It really boggles the mind to think that one half of our productive base is only beginning to be built now—the productive base that we will have in 1983. Now this, I submit, means the revolution of rising expectations can be very high indeed and still be capable of fulfilment.

● (2052)

Now the Prime Minister tells Canadians they should not have any expectations at all. Frankly, those expectations can still be attained in this country with proper direction from Ottawa, and we would be pleased to deliver it.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stevens: We can be once again not just number two but number one in the world, but we have a Prime Minister who, when he cannot attain certain goals, is a bit like a hockey player. Not being able to put the puck in the net any more, he says, "Widen the net".

[Mr. Stevens.]

We have been told tonight that there will be a phasing out of wage and price controls beginning on April 14 of next year. Frankly, I wonder whether the minister can be believed when he speaks about ending wage and price controls. We had the Prime Minister telling the country on the weekend that we must accept a new discipline, and then he came into the House and said that an example of the new discipline he had in mind was the controls program.

Let us not forget that it was the Prime Minister who, in the 1974 election campaign, promised the Canadian public that he would not institute wage and price controls, and then did so after his election. Can they be believed when they suggest that they are going to go into a decontrol phase period by April 14, 1978?

Some hon. Members: No way.

Mr. Stevens: The frank truth is that we have a Prime Minister who believes in state intervention. He believes that he and his mandarins know better how to run our lives than we do ourselves. In short, he likes controls for others. That is why I suggest to this House that while we are to go through an apparent decontrol program, if the present Prime Minister should ever gain re-election with a majority, we will be stuck with controls for an indefinite period, and that is the truth.

On another occasion I should like to outline some of the plans we would like to see instituted which we feel would restore the momentum of the economy and which would make us once again a viable country. However, I know our time is limited, and I would like to give some time tonight to the hon. member for Waterloo-Cambridge (Mr. Saltsman) who, I know, is anxious to speak in this debate as well.

Mr. Max Saltsman (Waterloo-Cambridge): Mr. Speaker, to begin with I should like to congratulate the mover and seconder of the motion for an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne, and I should also like to thank the hon. member for York-Simcoe (Mr. Stevens) for giving me at least a few minutes of his time.

I want to congratulate the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien) and wish him well. He is a man who is very likeable, and for that reason it is a grave disappointment to see the kind of mini-budget he brought in tonight. It is a disaster of the greatest proportions. At a time when the country desperately needs measures, or an understanding of the crisis we face, the minister gives us more of the same things which have brought us to the condition we are in now. We hoped for more from this minister. It is not that we expected he could pull some rabbit out of a hat or work some miracle in the four or five weeks he has occupied his ministry, but that he would at least have some understanding of the kind of serious situation we face in Canada. He read his speech well, but having read it well does not change the fact that he just had platitudes and banalities to put forward.

The minister says that there is no fundamental reason why we should not continue to grow. We have grown faster than most other countries in the past, and there is no fundamental