

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, November 20, 1984

The House met at 11.00 a.m.

● (1105)

[English]

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed from Monday, November 19, consideration of the motion of Mr. Ken James for an Address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her Speech at the opening of the session.

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina East): Mr. Speaker, in my remarks last night before the adjournment of the debate, I was quoting from the Bishops' statement which was issued on January 5, 1983. I was explaining to the House how the rhetoric then is similar to the rhetoric we hear now. For example, we hear that we must be more productive, that the private sector is the engine for economic growth and recovery, that we must make our private sector more competitive, and that the private sector must have a greater return on profits, that this is the key to economic recovery. The Bishops pointed out in their statement that at the same time working people, the unemployed, young people, and those people on fixed incomes are increasingly called upon to make the most sacrifices for economic recovery, but it is these people who suffer most from lay-offs, wage restraints and cut-backs in social services. The Bishops went on to state that yet there is no clear reason to believe that working people will ever really benefit from these and other sacrifices they are called to make. For even if companies recover and increase their profit margins, the additional revenues are likely to be reinvested in more labour-saving technology or exported to other countries, or spent on market speculation for luxury goods.

The Bishops and we in this Party endorse an alternate vision of how society can operate. Let me quote the following passage from the Bishops' statement:

There are, of course, alternative ways of looking at our industrial future and organizing our economy. This does not imply a halt to technological progress but rather a fundamental re-ordering of the basic values and priorities of economic development. An alternative economic vision, for example, could place priority on serving the basic needs of all people in this country, on the value of human labour, and an equitable distribution of wealth and power among people and regions. What would it mean to develop an alternative economic model that would place emphasis on—socially-useful forms of production; labour-intensive industries; the use of appropriate forms of technology; self-reliant models of economic development; community ownership and control of industries; new forms of worker management and ownership; and greater use of the renewable energy sources in industrial production?

Yet we see in the Speech from the Throne and in the economic statement exactly the opposite type of vision, Mr. Speaker. It is not a vision of self-sufficiency, because the Government cuts back on the home insulation program, and on research and development into alternate energy technologies.

These are regressive steps, steps that make us more dependent upon capital intensive, large scale energy projects. This removes the element of self-sufficiency and protection which individual Canadians can have.

We see again in the Speech from the Throne and in the financial statement the belief that only through catering to the large multinationals will Canada recover economically. This is a wrong vision, Mr. Speaker. It is a vision that has been tried in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Great Britain, Chile and in many other countries. It has proved to be a disaster for ordinary working people. I warn this Government that if it continues on this path it will destroy the economic and social fabric of Canada. This will result in poor people and working people having to rise up in anger against their plight.

This Government was given a tremendous mandate, a mandate for change. Canadians want to see a government develop and form new visions for economic development. They do not want to see Reagan economics as practised in the United States. They do not want to have the industrial and labour strife that has occurred in Great Britain.

I plead, therefore, with this Government to reverse its directions and to develop, on a co-operative basis, a new vision for Canada, a vision in which ordinary men and women can join, a vision based on fairness and equality for all.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any questions or comments?

Mr. Stackhouse: Mr. Speaker, I have a comment. I share the Hon. Member's concern that our technological development be accompanied by sufficient opportunity for human work. To supplement what the Hon. Member said, however, I would caution him that simply emphasizing the need for human labour is as bad as giving one's priority only to capital intensive development. If the Hon. Member has been in countries such as India, which I have had the privilege of visiting, he would see projects that involve much human labour. There are gangs of men and women making roads by hand, using hammers to break up stone for the road-bed. Such people know nothing else other than this dreary, almost animal-like kind of work. These people are the next in several generations of their families and clans committed to such labour. But one can go elsewhere in the great country of India and find that the level of life has been lifted, far above the kind of life I have just described, by technological development using large scale capital-intensive industries. What we in the western world are struggling to find is a balance which provides sufficient technological development and expansion to continue and indeed advance the standard of living and quality of life of Canadians and at the same time provide adequate employment opportunities.