

since its members would also be appointed for the term of a federal Parliament or a provincial legislature.

It was open to the present government and the Liberal Party, which has been in office for 39 of the last 43 years—I believe for 45 of the last 60 years—to correct the situation by changes in the quality of appointments, possibly the term of appointments, and by a slackening of party discipline. This might have resulted in meaningful reforms. I grant you that there have been some endeavours in this area, but they have been much too timid.

In any event, it will be interesting to watch this house operating under the suspended death sentence provided in Bill C-60. I will be interested to see if there is any change in the behaviour of the members who officially support the present government. As far as I am concerned, if the Senate is to be abolished, I want the alternative to be something better.

**Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear.

**Senator Flynn:** I would also like one last chance to prove to the government that we could be more efficient if only it would let us operate freely and did not impose all these constraints on the Liberal majority.

In short, the government has never had a high opinion of the Senate, and I suggest to honourable senators that the government bears the main responsibility for our poor image in the eyes of the public. We should do everything in our power to improve that image before our demise, if demise there has to be.

At this point, I should offer my sympathy to the Leader of the Government. He has had to go through a very difficult period trying to reconcile his obligations as a member of both the administration and the Senate. But I suppose he finds himself in a better situation as a member of the Senate than in having to run in British Columbia in the next general election, with the risk of obtaining only 10 per cent of the popular vote.

The last window on the perspective of the government which I wish to open is on the economy. I do not intend to open it very wide. I need not cite many figures to assert that our economic situation is extremely serious, that since 1968 we have witnessed constant deterioration—government expenditures have multiplied four and a half times; the consumer price index has increased from 89.4 to 168.9; the purchasing power of the dollar has fallen to 52 cents. We have reached a point where our dollar is now worth less than it was at the worst time of the depression. Unemployment is two and a half times what it was; UIC benefits are close to eight times higher; there are increased budgetary deficits and increased public debt, et cetera.

The Speech from the Throne speaks of a reduction in federal spending; a reduction of the government's share of the national wealth; a reduction in the size of the Public Service; wage restraint in the public sector; elimination of excessive government intervention in the private sector, et cetera, et cetera.

If honourable senators were to read the Speech from the Throne of four years ago—or of the last session, for that

matter—and compare it to the present one, they would hardly notice any difference except in the emphasis on certain general principles.

When he became Prime Minister, Mr. Trudeau waged a campaign on the theme of the "Just Society," suggesting mild government intervention in the economy. Five or so years later he spoke of the "New Society," charging that the private sector was a failure and that there was no other solution than a more interventionist welfare state. Now, he sees a solution in the return of the "Old Society," with less government intervention and more reliance on the private sector.

These somersaults are at the root of many of our present difficulties. The business world does not know exactly in what direction the government is moving or may move tomorrow. For instance, the Speech from the Throne says:

Expenditure restraint has been a central theme of federal policy and practice since October, 1975.

What results have we had? An increase in spending of 45 per cent. The Throne Speech goes on further to say:

In August, the Government set itself a more ambitious restraint objective. Planned—

I emphasize the word "planned."

—federal spending this fiscal year will be reduced by five hundred million dollars, and next year's projected spending will be reduced by two billion dollars. As a result, the projected rate of expenditure growth during the next fiscal year is 8.9 per cent. That is well below the forecast growth of 11 per cent for the GNP.

Honourable senators will have noticed the words "planned federal spending," "projected spending," and "projected rate of expenditure." Can anyone tell me what, in practice, that amounts to? I can't either. But one thing we are sure of is that the total expenditure for next year will be higher. That is certain. That is what the Throne Speech says.

The government will not spend as much as it would have liked to spend, but it will still spend more than last year. The government promises to abandon certain programs, but at the same time it informs us that it will shift dollars or transfer funds from low-priority to high-priority goals. Of course, the government is a master at defining which are the low-priority and which are the high-priority goals.

Let us look at them. They are not goals set over the long term, the result of a logical assessment of hard facts. They are targets hastily adopted for the sake of political expediency, at a time when the government was looking forward to a fall election. The announcements in August, after the Prime Minister returned from Bonn, his toying with the idea of a fall election, the way the government has talked to taxpayers and the business world over the past four years—all these show this government's utter disregard for the intelligence of the man in the street. But the man in the street yesterday told the government that he will not be fooled much longer.