

*The Address—Mr. Nowlan*

Then there are other forms and trappings which to me, Madam Speaker, have developed a sterility of ritual, where the conditioned response replaces any thought or reason. One is that which begins the proceedings of this House. I refer to the convoluted prayer which daily begins our proceedings and, in its attempt to cover all, as far as I am concerned, stimulates few, if any. I wonder whether a simple moment of silence for others, or a simple prayer for Canada, would not be more appropriate than the present litany that we "listen to" with our ears closed.

We then have the performance given by Black Rod. He has to knock to come in, because the last King that walked into a Commons chamber lost his head. I think the representative of the King—which in effect he is—should knock. I must say in times gone by I have watched the procession from the door to the Chair with the "Black Rod tango" of seven steps and a bow, seven steps and a bow. I find that difficult to rationalize.

Frankly, I think this business that we go through of receiving a message from the Governor General signed by his own hand, as a result of which we all jump up like puppets, like marionettes, is unnecessary. I suppose there is reason for it. I suppose it is respect for the sovereign, who is the soul of the land. We are the heart of the land. Perhaps there is some other force that goes on in perpetuity. We do not; we come and go with elections, but the sovereign of the land does not. I know other members make the odd grimace when we receive a message signed in the Governor General's own hand and we all have to stand and go through this little ritual.

These are a few of the things that have assaulted my sensibilities, and I think at times the sensibilities of others too. This sort of thing makes me really question how relevant it is today. If we have this kind of blind vision on some of the little things, we require tunnel vision on some of the big things.

Obviously, Madam Speaker, I want to talk about the Speech from the Throne and to make reference to a few things referred to by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). I only wish the Prime Minister had had the intestinal fortitude to say on the campaign trail what, in effect, he said in this House in his one hour and 20 minute speech. I suppose from his point of view it was one of his more interesting speeches, certainly one of the most interesting speeches I have heard him give in this House.

● (1630)

I find it insulting to the nth degree that having fought an election campaign during which the economy was an issue—and this is something that affects all Canadians regardless of their station in life—the Prime Minister mentioned the word "inflation" only once during his speech. I think that is borne out by the record.

I think the Prime Minister's speech was more interesting in respect of what was left out than what it contained. In any event let us start with what he did say, because I want to cover this matter and deal with some of the problems facing the Department of Transport and Communications. If I have time I should also like to describe the virtues and the beauties of the riding I have the great privilege to represent.

[Mr. Nowlan.]

In the eyes of even those hon. members from other parts of the country, the Annapolis Valley is the most beautiful riding in Canada. Every member expresses a similar view about his own riding, but I assure you that I felt that way about the Annapolis Valley before becoming a member of this House, and I will feel the same way long after I have left. To anyone who has travelled in the east I am sure that the Annapolis Valley, whether it be in the spring, summer, winter or fall, is beautiful to the eye. The people there are most intelligent and some of the most emancipated in this country.

**Mr. Stanfield:** You've only got two hours!

**Mr. Nowlan:** My leader says I am limited to two hours so I had better get on with my remarks and leave that until later. Let me refer to some of the things the Prime Minister said in his speech on the Address in Reply. I have listened to other speeches he has made during throne speech debates in the past, and I remember particularly his speech in 1968.

The Prime Minister talked about reform of the rules of this House. That is a popular phrase among laymen one meets around the House. Of course there has to be reform. If we do not maintain reform of our own rules and procedures as an ongoing process, making things more relevant, we are not doing our duty. I commend the Prime Minister for focussing some attention on this matter.

I was here in 1969 following the election of another majority parliament in 1968. The present Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Macdonald) was then the House leader. He was popularly known then as "Thumper", probably because he went around trying to thump members of the opposition into accepting rule changes. Those rule changes resulted in a very acrimonious debate, particularly in respect of Rule 75A, 75B and 75C. Those members who were here then will remember that we fought against those rules long into the summer because we felt this was not reform but de-form of the House of Commons. We felt that the proposed rules would emasculate this place and that members would become political eunuchs in terms of any real contribution they might make here, on the floor of the House or in committees.

Some members I am sure feel we have made some good changes to the rules. There was a fundamental change in 1966 which, I suggest, adversely affected the rights and privileges of members of this House. I have in mind the change that resulted in the estimates of the various departments being considered by committees.

Before the change hon. members could question ministers about certain items of expenditures that had a direct bearing on their constituencies. At that time a member could get an answer under the threat of refusing to pass the estimates of a certain department. A member might not agree with the answer he received, but at least that was a step in the right direction. The member could then confront the minister with his answer six months or a year later, with the hope that something constructive would be accomplished. In any event the estimates were taken out of the House and I suggest this was a retrograde step.

The Prime Minister's reference to reform bothers me because of something I recall very distinctly that took