

*Economic and Social Development*

determine the nature of this growth? At this very moment the Canadian Association of the Club of Rome is meeting in Ottawa to wrestle with that question. This is not just a theoretical exercise. Great changes and perplexing questions are all around us in Canada and throughout the world. Will we give human development precedence over material growth? Will we forgo the satisfaction of immediate desires in favour of future stability? Will we use our enormous techno-scientific power for the benefit of humanity as a whole? An important new publication by the Club of Rome entitled "Goals for Mankind" stresses the urgency of establishing these goals. I quote from it as follows:

The inquiry into what we are up to, what we can or should do with ourselves and future generations, should undoubtedly come first, if for no other reason than because without an over-all design our frenzied activities can but give rise to colossal disorder—which is precisely what is beginning to occur today.

I am asking parliament to establish a mechanism for focusing on a wide range of interlocking economic, social, scientific, constitutional and cultural problems that will be facing Canada in the 1980s. I am asking that we look ahead to establish priorities in government planning so that Canadians get a sense of direction of where we are going, so that Canadians be given a chance to state what kind of country they want and so that the input into the decision-making process is greatly expanded beyond governmental bureaucracy.

The committee I propose is far more than just an exercise to keep parliamentarians busy. It is urgent because of the economic and social disorder of our time. To put it simply, we are backing into the future. Technology has given us the ability to plan our future, yet the political process does nothing more than put band-aids on problems that break out. Analysts by the dozen, from Alvin Toffler to the Economic Council of Canada, have told us that. We are preoccupied with inflation, unemployment, regional disparities and discontent and, now, the overriding question of national unity. Nor can Canada escape increasing involvement in the two paramount international issues of disarmament and Third World development. All of these problems call for co-operative, long-range solutions. Why, then, do we not provide Canadians with an opportunity to tell government what kind of Canada they want?

In this moment of crisis in which we seem stunned by the threat of Quebec's separation, let us take some positive action which will establish not only why the country should stay together, but also how we can build a more just and equitable society, responding to economic and social needs in every region of Canada.

Government and parliament make a big mistake by consistently examining society using only factors easily convertible to quantitative data such as income levels, production and trade balances. The determination of public policy should also take into account the psychological and, in the broadest sense, the spiritual reaction of society to the rapid social changes of the past three decades. Of course, it is difficult to find consensus on national goals in modern society. But we ought to try, for it has become clear to me on my travels across the country—and I have spoken in 24 Canadian cities and towns since January—

[Mr. Roche.]

that there are men and women in increasing numbers who long for a more human social order.

A successful society requires more than growing statistics. It requires the revival of what journalist-philosopher Walter Lippman called a public philosophy. In a public philosophy the highest laws are those upon which all rational men of good will, when fully informed, will tend to agree. All men, both those who govern and those who are governed, are always under those laws which can be developed and refined by rational discussion. The question before us is whether we will implement a public philosophy in the 1980s or continue to tolerate a disjointed society where the loss of human dignity has reached scandalous proportions.

People are paying higher taxes to support ever-growing government at all levels, while the problems of housing, resource distribution, safety and transportation are getting worse. Distrust of a powerful and faceless bureaucracy in Ottawa is increasing. Many people have vague feelings about something being wrong and blame their politicians for not solving it. The criticisms we receive, however, go beyond specific objections and reveal a fear and frustration over the discontinuities of modern life. It is normal for politicians to receive complaints. What is abnormal is that the source of alienation now goes beyond the political process and is found in the depths of society itself. This is by no means a Canadian phenomenon. It is part of the general decline in the confidence in democratic governments everywhere. A lack of faith in democracy is spreading.

Analysing this crisis, the trilateral commission, which is composed of scholars from western Europe, Japan and North America, declared that the central dilemma of democracy is that "the demands on democratic government grow, while the capacity of democratic government stagnates." We have for so long elected politicians on their supposed ability to ensure the fulfilment of consumer demands that the political process is unable to respond to the unprecedented challenges posed by the reality of an interdependent global community. Our political system was made for another age. I do not have much confidence that it will be reformed as long as we encourage members of parliament to measure their usefulness by the number of short-range benefits conferred on their electors.

Unquestionably, the parliamentary process itself needs to be updated to make it more effective: television coverage, shorter speeches, examining departmental estimates in the House rather than in committee, more support staff for members of parliament. However, merely improving the myriad internal systems and mechanism will not be enough. Modernization of the institution will not, by itself, restore public confidence in the ability of members of parliament to lead Canada today.

Members of parliament cannot just snap their fingers and restore stability and tranquility. Members of parliament are not even agreed on how much or what kind of moral leadership we are capable of giving. Politicians alone cannot successfully cope with the explosion of change around us. People from every walk of life must become more finely attuned to what is really happening in the world. Then, perhaps, the political