

*The Address—Mr. Low*

speak as he had; therefore I shall have to be more careful in my selection. I will not have a chance to speak about all the matters I should like to discuss. I therefore will cover some of the things that those who preceded me have dealt with; but if I do so, it certainly is not with any desire to repeat but rather perhaps to underline or to emphasize some of the matters and their importance, and to indicate that the position we take as an opposition in this house is indeed the position which the people of this country are taking. I believe that the opposition parties are much closer to the people than the government appears to be. I believe that we are saying here today exactly what the people of Canada from one coast to the other would say if they were here. I think that unanimity is something which the government ought to take into consideration; and if it does not do so, of course it will be to their detriment.

In his address the leader of the opposition again asked for a committee of this house to be set up to examine into defence expenditures. We have taken our position with respect to that demand on several occasions before. We think that the government should be ready, by all means at their disposal, to reveal to us in this house all of the information that we require to enable us properly to determine the real situation with respect to our defence position. Whether that is by committee or whether it is by some other means, I am not prepared to try to determine this afternoon. We certainly support the request for the fullest possible information concerning our defence preparations and the costs thereof.

With respect to veterans' pensions, already mentioned by the two preceding speakers, may I say that we have always advocated that an escalator clause should be inserted in the Pension Act—we think that should have been done at the last session—which would keep pensions in line with the cost of living. We are pressing strongly that that be done at this session.

I should now like to say a few words about that part of His Excellency's address which has to do with old age security. The address declares that the primary reason for meeting in this session is to give consideration to increased security for our senior citizens, through universal pensions without a means test for those Canadians over seventy years of age. That may have been the primary reason for the government calling a session, but I think there are other matters that will have to be considered—matters that perhaps rank at least equal in importance with old

age security, important as we believe that to be. However, we are well pleased that government and public consciousness of the need and desirability of greater old age security has finally crystallized into action by this parliament. We are happy that at long last measures are to be enacted which will improve the lot of most of those Canadians over seventy years of age. It has been a long time coming. Many of the members of this house have been pressing for this type of legislation and these improvements for a good many years. The members of the Social Credit group, of which I have the honour to be the leader here, are among those who have been struggling for greater old age security for going on twenty years, and have made their demands well known inside and outside of this house. While we rejoice over the progress that has been made in this field, our satisfaction is tempered somewhat when we think of what happens every time a new social security measure is adopted by the federal government.

Old age security measures are just one phase of a war against poverty. Some of us at least—and I count myself and my fellow members of the Social Credit group here among them—have long since set our hearts on completely abolishing poverty from amongst Canadians, and nothing less will satisfy us. We are firm in our conviction that any country that is endowed with the wealth of resources, both natural and human, that Canada has been blessed with, need not be plagued with poverty amongst any group of our population. We can—and I think we have demonstrated it in the past—produce in quantities sufficient to guarantee a high standard of living for all our people, but we have not yet by any means solved the faults and the problems of distribution. Our failure to do so has been very largely because so many of our people, including those in high positions in government, and in the civil service—perhaps I had better say especially those in high places in government and in the civil service—have clung tenaciously to outmoded ideas.

I find myself in quite thorough agreement with what Bertrand Russell had to say in one of his broadcasts recently from Britain. I do not remember exactly the words he used, but he expressed the thought that most of the trouble in the world today could be traced to hanging on to ideas that no longer fit the situation. Our whole economic system is based on a philosophy of scarcity. This we have brought before the house on numerous occasions prior to today. The truth is that the whole idea of scarcity throughout the whole world, and particularly right here