

The Address—Mr. Chrétien

them to build Lepreau I. They want us to help to build Lepreau II and so on. However, I agree with the Hon. Member that if some sector of their economy is in trouble at this time, such as the pulp and paper industry, they should attempt to help the industry in terms of the power rate if they can, because they have to match the competition.

Natural gas has now come to the Province of Quebec. I am informed that the Government of Quebec, Hydro Quebec, is reducing the rates of some industry for electricity. In the case of approximately 20 buyers in my own district, they had to choose between natural gas and hydroelectric power. Because Hydro Quebec wanted to keep them as clients, not to lose clientele to its competitors in natural gas, they were given new rates. Of course it is the responsibility of the Government. I agree that we have helped them, but they should ensure in their economic planning in terms of energy that there is help for the industries in New Brunswick which require it.

Mr. Forrestall: Mr. Speaker, I have a very brief question for the Minister. Could he give us some indication of what will be the price of offshore gas with that regime so that we might properly take a look at the rate at which we should go ahead putting infrastructure in place? Does he agree that we should put infrastructure in place in anticipation of a competitive level of gas pricing by approximately 1986-87?

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, to have rational development of Sable Island natural gas, first we have to assess the quantities of available natural gas and, second, we have to find markets. Most of that gas, if we want to market it, will have to be exported, because there is not an adequate market in the Maritimes for it. I have been informed that the companies involved at this time are in negotiation with utilities in north-eastern United States to sell their gas. Of course, if they do not find markets, they will be unable to develop and the infrastructure will be too expensive to take the gas to the shore just for the markets of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. They have to look at other markets. This is exactly what the companies are doing at this time. They keep both the Government of Nova Scotia and myself informed of their progress.

Mr. Forrestall: When will we know?

Mr. Chrétien: I do not know. They will have to sign firm contracts. However, the work is proceeding at this time. They have hired engineers and so on to design the system for the development of that natural gas. The work is proceeding normally, and they are working on the social and environmental impact. There will be public hearings and so on. We hope to have reports soon, as well as the development program of Mobil Oil, the main developer. The work is progressing normally, but probably the final decision will be made in the context of market availability.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The period for questioning has expired.

Mr. Terry Sargeant (Selkirk-Interlake): Mr. Speaker, I certainly welcome this rather rare opportunity to participate in a debate on the Speech from the Throne. As we all know, it has been a long time since the last one. After waiting some 3.5 years, I found it somewhat ironic that last Wednesday, a typical Canadian December day, the Ottawa airport was closed, preventing many Hon. Members of the House, including myself, from hearing the Throne Speech. As I learned later with a great deal of disappointment—but I must say without much surprise after having an opportunity to read it—I did not miss very much.

If I have learned nothing else in the last four and a half years I have been in the House, I have learned that one should not hold one's breath waiting for a Liberal Government, or a Tory Government for that matter, to do anything meaningful, innovative or sincere in addressing the myriad problems facing Canadian society and indeed the world society today.

The Throne Speech addressed three major themes—jobs, medicare and peace. As well it should have; no one can argue that these are not the three most important concerns of our society today. However, one can certainly quarrel with the Government's proposed solutions to these concerns. In the area of jobs, with over 1.5 million Canadians out of work, with a half million of them being young people, the Government is offering something like \$300 million in short-term band-aid solutions. That \$300 million is like spitting in the Pacific Ocean.

In the area of medicare, which has been under increasing pressure for the past few years, we have learned this afternoon that there will finally be some action, the Canada Health Act having been tabled today. The Minister has been promising the House this Canada Health Act for well over a year and a half. If the Government and if the Minister are really sincere in their oft expressed concern or commitment to preserve medicare, why did they wait so long to take any action?

In the area of peace, the promises in the Speech from the Throne offered less real initiatives than those offered in 1980. Given that the promises made in 1980 were for the most part either abandoned or greatly weakened, one might be forgiven for being somewhat sceptical about the success of current peace initiatives. Supportive? Yes, we are. We are very supportive of these initiatives but, alas, we are not terribly hopeful that the Government will deliver on them.

In the few minutes available to me this afternoon I want to address in particular two topics. The first is what the Throne Speech will do for my constituency of Selkirk-Interlake or, more specifically, what it will not do. Second, I want to comment somewhat on the peace initiatives. In preparing to make my comments today, I reread my speech of April 1980 in reply to that year's Throne Speech. I was struck by how little had changed. On looking over that speech, I discovered that I could have reread most of it today and those comments would have been appropriate in reply to this year's Throne Speech. I was also struck by the article of a regular columnist who covers the Hill which pointed out that not very much had changed from this Throne Speech to the one of 1978.