

of the Canadian people, who subsequently acted to correct the situation. There are now in this vast country other legislatures where Senator Macquarrie can view Liberal majorities hard at work. In less than two years, Liberals were elected to govern in three provinces—Quebec, Ontario and Prince Edward Island—and substantially increased their representation in three others. Over 60 per cent of Canadians now find themselves in the enviable position of living and working under provincial Liberal governments. I think it is also interesting to note, honourable senators—to paraphrase Senator Macquarrie's words—that I am now standing in the only legislative assembly in this vast country which has experienced an increase in Conservative members since the general election of 1984. Not surprisingly, the electorate had nothing to do with, and cannot be held responsible for, this lamentable increase!

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Senator MacEachen: Honourable senators, we are now, it may be said—possibly with a certain caution—around the half-way point between two general elections—a sobering thought for a government that has dropped in public favour so precipitously in those two years. We have seen some evidence of that government's self-criticism: a big cabinet shuffle; a Prime Minister travelling from one unpleasant incident to another throughout the country; vigorous efforts to improve communications for the benefit of us poor people who are not getting the message and not understanding properly what the government is doing. This was all evidence of reappraisal and of a new start, a spurt of activity that enhanced our expectations of new horizons to be disclosed in the Speech from the Throne. Indeed, the opening of Parliament itself was delayed so that the new political craftsmen, some of whom are with us this afternoon, would have an opportunity to fashion this new masterpiece that was to constitute the fresh start for the government. But as the horizons unfolded last week in this very chamber, one could not but conclude that those craftsmen had failed in their mission, or that the delay had not been long enough and they had not had sufficient time to lift the government into a new phase or level of vision and activity.

We know, honourable senators, that the 1984 Speech from the Throne rested principally on three pillars of wisdom: reconciliation, economic renewal and renewed Canadian internationalism. Of course, this newly-discovered wisdom would result in the achievement of three historical events in the life of this government: Quebec would embrace the Constitution; the budget deficit and the national debt would cease to be a vicious circle; and a new era in our relationships with the United States would begin with the establishment of a "true partnership," to use the words of the Speech from the Throne of 1984.

Senator Frith: Someone is trying to get into the Senate, and bypass the Prime Minister.

Senator MacEachen: Honourable senators, the pillars are still there, although somewhat in silhouette. The government displays admirable verbal continuity, but the confidence seems to be gone, the boldness is gone, the cockiness has disappeared and the government is obviously searching around for new

paths to travel, in view of the experience it has had in the last year or two. One might say that the pillars are there, but the roof is caving in.

● (1430)

In those intervening years, the government has either reversed itself or quietly backed away from policies it had previously considered crucial. It is obvious that the United States is no longer the cornerstone of Canadian foreign policy. As I shall point out later, the United States, as the object of international interest, is hardly mentioned in the Speech from the Throne, and yesterday, in a speech made in the House of Commons, the Secretary of State for External Affairs made no reference to the importance of the United States in Canadian foreign policy. That is quite an amazing turn-around in two years.

With respect to trade, where is the ambition to secure a comprehensive free-trade arrangement with the United States? In the Speech from the Throne there is talk about a "mutually advantageous trade agreement with the United States." Just recently we signed an agreement for the purchase and sale of wheat with Russia. That is a trade agreement. So, the vocabulary is muted and the ambition has dissipated in the trade field.

A third area of deep interest is the deficit. Preoccupation with the deficit is no longer to be the obsessive goal of the government; that objective will take its place among other goals that the government has now set for itself. Finally, the solid commitment to bring Québec into the Constitution is now heavily qualified in the Speech from the Throne, as I shall attempt to point out.

Priorities and policies have become fuzzy and diluted; the government has dropped all pretensions of offering this country leadership and now offers instead an unpalatable mush of generalities. So unpalatable is the mush that has been served up that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has himself disowned the Speech from the Throne. Of course, I hesitate to point out in making that comment that an eminent journalist has told us:

Sitting in the Chamber near the Speaker's Chair was the man substantially responsible for the Speech, Lowell Murray, the Government Leader in the Senate.

Senator Perrault: The plot thickens!

Senator MacEachen: The Honourable Marcel Masse has said:

I am one of those who, if I may be allowed to have personal views, wonders what's the use of this business.

Senator Austin: Senator Murray thinks the same thing.

Senator MacEachen: If that is the confidence the government has in its own efforts, then I say, "What's the use?"

Honourable senators, no current issue has been of greater concern to us than the inability of the Canadian economy to create an acceptable level of jobs from the Atlantic to the Pacific, despite improved rates of economic growth and despite improved employment levels in certain regions of the country.