

The Address—Mr. Broadbent

possessing all the qualities of a genuine gentleman. I should like to add that I am not saying any of these things because it is, supposedly, the conventional thing to do; it is something I genuinely believe, because I heard it expressed on countless occasions since I arrived in Ottawa and, prior to that, in my riding. I have rarely agreed with the policies of the party which Mr. Starr represented for many years, but I unhesitatingly salute Mr. Starr the man.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Broadbent: Now, in my short but, I hope, not completely irrelevant speech I wish to address myself to the two issues raised by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). In his speech on Monday of this week the right hon. gentleman suggested that in our discussions during the present debate we should concern ourselves with questions which relate to "the kind of country in which we want to be living and the directions in which we should be moving to build such a country."

Earlier this year the Prime Minister suggested, if I understood him correctly, that in Canada we had gone about as far as we could in our efforts to construct a welfare state. Once we have medicare established on a national basis, he implied, the structure would be almost complete.

As a member of the opposition, and more particularly perhaps, as a New Democrat, I am in the unfortunate position of having to agree with the Prime Minister on both issues. In short, it seems to me that the debate on the speech from the throne is an occasion when the social philosophical objectives of Canada should be discussed; and, second, it is true that we now have in Canada the basic structural components of a modern welfare state.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin my contribution by saying something about the second issue. The 100 years since confederation can be divided roughly into two socio-economic periods. Up to the 1930's Canadians were concerned with laying the foundations of a viable capitalist democracy in which our two principal cultural groups could at least co-exist peacefully within the framework of a liberal constitution. The central components of a liberal democratic society were firmly established throughout the land: universal franchise; freedoms of speech, religion, press and assembly; competing political parties, and a national banking system.

[Mr. Broadbent.]

Since the 1930's we have experienced important modifications of the classical liberal structure. The more important of these include: (1) the right of trade unions to exist and to strike; (2) the gradual implementation of old age pensions; (3) some form of progressive taxation; (4) comprehensive medical and health programs and (5) an unemployment insurance scheme.

No sensible Canadian would deny that these measures have made a very significant change in the kind of life the majority of our people can now experience. They have provided the quantitative basis for a qualitatively enriched life for millions of adults and children. These five changes have provided the structural core of our modern welfare state.

I emphasize the point that we have the core. It would, however, be both false and irresponsible for me to suggest that we have the whole apple. Previous speakers in this debate have ably indicated serious deficiencies which still remain and about which the government gives almost no indication of seriously concerning itself. The most glaring of these are: (1) the abysmal lack of adequate housing, (2) severe economic inequality between both individuals and regions, (3) the absence of a guaranteed annual income, and (4) an outmoded and inequitable system of taxation—a shock to the western world, I might add.

Mr. Speaker, these four areas of concern should not in any way be dismissed as being of minor significance. They are the major evils of the day. They can be and should be remedied. Previous speakers from the New Democratic party have indicated their existence and have suggested solutions in this house. Earlier in the year our leader—soon to be returned to this house—and candidates across the land discussed them directly with the Canadian people. There is little need for me, at least in this debate, to add to what has already been said.

Instead, what I wish to stress is that every one of these evils can be substantially dealt with within the existing socio-economic structure. We do have the core of the welfare state. We need only the will to complete it. Houses can be built, taxation can be improved, a guaranteed income can be introduced, and regional disparities can be significantly modified. All this can be done without making any further significant changes in the distribution of power within Canadian society.