

The Address—Mr. Stanfield

There are so many respects in which needs must be met. As a high priority we must adjust, ought to adjust, the old age security and other pensions to relate them more realistically to the increase in the cost of living. A 2 per cent ceiling on the cost of living adjustment is absurd when inflation has been more than 4 per cent for the past several years. We are talking here about people who are unable to help themselves. Surely, it is wrong for us to expect them to bear the burden of inflation or bear the burden of governmental anti-inflationary policies.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Stanfield: Of course action should be taken in respect of the serious situation relating to public service pensioners whom the government seems to shuffle to the bottom of the pile year after year. I was led to believe we would see some action taken in connection with a federal minimum wage. There is no mention of this in the Speech from the Throne. I hope the Prime Minister will be prepared to correct this situation. The government ought to recognize fully the urban fact of Canada. A way must be worked out with the provinces so that the cities can be involved fully in the discussions because clearly their responsibilities become more demanding each year and they become more responsible each year for the living environment of an increasing number of Canadians. We, ourselves, put forward at least a dozen specific recommendations in connection with housing, but the government seems to prefer to stand still. Urban renewal, important to the renovation and the whole environment of our cities, has for the most part been put in a deep freeze and yet the Speech from the Throne seems to contemplate this situation with great confidence.

Surely, the government of Canada should give an example to the Canadian Council of Resource Ministers in working out a strategy in respect of every aspect of our renewable and unrenewable resources and in working out a development plan for the various regions of the country so that the provinces and municipalities can proceed with them. The members of my party suggested something similar to a meeting of the Council of Resource Ministers, a meeting in connection with human resources.

There seemed to be a great deal of complacency in the Speech from the Throne with regard to the educational opportunities and the financial abilities of the proper authorities

to support an adequate opportunity for education for young Canadians today. Whatever became of the excellent concept behind the Department of Manpower, which seems to be starving from lack of attention and interest on the part of the cabinet as a whole? What indication is there in the Speech from the Throne with regard to the recognition of the importance of establishing priorities in this country?

There is an urgent need for the setting up of a central agency to co-ordinate and lead the fight against all forms of pollution. The water act by itself is quite inadequate. We ought to have a real attack on the problems of our various industries rather than the sort of gesture contained in the Speech from the Throne toward agriculture. This is not the sort of thing the people involved in these industries expected. For example, it seems to be more and more widely accepted that unless a young man inherits a farm it is now very difficult for him to get into agriculture or farming in a viable way. Is this an acceptable situation to this government? Surely, it is not beyond the ability of this government to propose measures, in co-operation with the provinces, which would enable those interested in agriculture, and those qualified to do so, to get into agriculture in a viable way rather than be faced with the present situation in which it seems to be impossible for them to do so unless they should inherit a viable farm.

There are literally dozens of opportunities for federal interest and action and dozens of areas where action is needed. I hope the Prime Minister will take the opportunity this afternoon to fill some of the very great gaps which exist in the Speech from the Throne, because as it reads it is so cold that it is bound to be a keen disappointment to parliamentarians on all sides of the House.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Stanfield: It amounts to a notice that we have been summoned here to process a good deal of legislation but will not be asked at this session to confront many of the most urgent problems facing the people of Canada. But if the throne speech is a disappointment to parliamentarians on all sides of the House, it is an even keener disappointment to those Canadians who voted for the government in the belief that it had some commitment to social justice and that it wanted to change lives as well as change laws.