

Speech from the Throne

• (1430)

Unsettled times are seldom comfortable to those whose attitudes are fixed, whose mental anchors are in the past, but they can be rewarding to the imaginative for they provide the necessary environment for improving social conditions, and some chance for avoiding the otherwise inevitable revolution against advantage and privilege. The winds of change need not always strike with hurricane force. A society receptive to innovation, with a government responsive to social needs, will find itself able to harness the energy of those winds and benefit from them.

Resilience and stamina are among the characteristics of Canadians, Mr. Speaker, not pessimism and despair. Spokesmen opposite conveniently overlook the fact that Canada has faced two crises of grave proportions in the past 16 months and has emerged from each of them stronger and with increased self-confidence.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: One of those crises, which commenced with the events of last August, has led to the revaluation of every major currency in the world except Canada's. It has led as well to pressures upon us of considerable magnitude seeking trade concessions.

The government's response to these pressures, Mr. Speaker, has been one which is respected by Canadians and by our trading partners alike. We have stated that trade is Canada's principal source of prosperity; that, consequently, we will no more foresake that prosperity than we will demand from others unbalanced benefits, unfair protection, or unreasonable arrangements.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: Canada's proud record as one of the world's leading trading nations was gained through a policy of mutual advantage and broad access. Our successes are the result of superior products, aggressive marketing, and reliability as a trading partner. They have not been achieved as a consequence of the unfair techniques employed by some countries. The government has no intention of hindering these talents and successes of Canadian businessmen in order to prove to any country our dedication to conviviality or good fellowship.

The Canadian dollar was at a free and fair value on August 15, 1971. It was there because this government had the courage and the foresight in June, 1970, to anticipate severe monetary disturbances and to take steps to diminish their impact on Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: The dollar remains today at the same fair value—the only major currency in the world not revalued—because this government refused to back down when the going got tough. There is not the slightest reason to believe that we will be less firm in defence of our trading interests in weeks and months to come.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: Canada's trading posture with the United States will be varied to the mutual advantage of both countries when once negotiations to that end conclude. It

[Mr. Trudeau.]

will not be varied because some politicians and commentators in this country are so impressed with dramatic language that they fill front pages with stories of catastrophe, imminent doom and unrelieved tension.

The crisis of the past few months has been real enough, Mr. Speaker, and the stakes vital to our prosperity. The situation has called for a more balanced assessment, however, and much cooler nerves, than were evident recently in many members of the opposition who have seemed hypnotized by unsubstantiated threats and cries of anguish from unnamed and often unknown sources.

Good relations, Mr. Speaker, with other countries are not built out of give-aways any more than they are built out of intransigence. The respect with which Canada and the Canadian government is regarded in other countries comes from our record of honesty and fairness in our transactions and relations. Ours is an enviable reputation in these respects, and I am not about to diminish it. Nor, I hasten to add, and notwithstanding all too much comment to the contrary, is any government anywhere demanding or suggesting that Canada agree to substantial concessions under threat of grave retaliation. The United States does not conduct its business with Canada in that fashion, much as such a myth is employed by the NDP and others as a tonic to grow hair on their chests.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: Last November, the Conservative party asked this House to entertain a motion of non-confidence in the government, condemning what it claimed were deteriorating relations between Canada and the United States, and criticizing the alleged absence of communications between Ottawa and Washington. The Conservative spokesman, the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie), devoted some time to one of his favourite, and wholly unsubstantiated, theories that there were no telephone calls between the White House and my office, that there were no exchanges of correspondence between the President and myself, and that the leaders of the two governments no longer "spoke freely and regularly on matters concerning our countries". Such jibberish, Mr. Speaker.

Apart from the preposterous falsity of these allegations, does that gentleman now suggest that had Canada been nicer to the Americans we would have been exempted from the 10 per cent surcharge? Not Norway, not Burma, not Togo, not Mexico, nor any of the other countries of the world affected by that blanket policy, but Canada? By a smile and a prepaid telephone call, I could have avoided for Canada the impact of the surcharge! How simple is the conduct of foreign relations when one is the critic, not the executor!

I challenge the Conservatives, Mr. Speaker, to describe honestly and candidly to the Canadian people what their posture towards the United States would be in this difficult negotiation. Would they have gone to Washington cap in hand, to employ their own phrase, and agreed to a forced upward valuation of the dollar in order to prove their friendship with the United States? We didn't, and we did not endanger Canada's good standing with the United States in any way by not doing so. Would the Conservatives have made unilateral trade concessions in order to free us of the requirement of tough bargaining? We didn't,