

The Address—Mr. Noseworthy

neither that faith in the future of Canada nor the determination to translate that faith into action.

I find it difficult to make the statements made by the Prime Minister during the election campaign, and which I have quoted, jibe with that statement made on election night and repeated by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, in which he says:

And now you have given to my colleagues and to me the vote of confidence for which we appealed. I wish to repeat the promise which is my only election promise—to give you the best services of which I am capable.

Again I say that, if all of the quotations are reported correctly by the Canadian Press and by papers such as the *Toronto Daily Star*, then either those were definite election promises by the Prime Minister with regard to that shelf concept of public works, or the English language no longer has any meaning.

What is the government's present policy with regard to that shelf of public works? The Prime Minister gives us the answer at page 57 of *Hansard* of February 20, where he is reported as saying as follows:

A survey was made last year of the state of planning of all capital projects of the federal government, including some, like the trans-Canada highway, to be executed jointly with provincial governments.

Then a few paragraphs further on he continues:

The results of the survey satisfied the government that the shelf concept, when limited to its own public investment program, was not the best approach at the present time.

To my mind this can mean one thing, Mr. Speaker, and one thing only, namely, that the shelf concept of public works so elaborately set forth in the white paper, in the proposals to the dominion-provincial conference, and in the clear-cut promises of the Prime Minister and his cabinet ministers during the election campaign, has now been abandoned as far as meeting the present unemployment situation is concerned.

Mr. Knowles: The shelf has been put on the shelf.

Mr. Noseworthy: Again, Mr. Speaker, I think we are justified in asking at what time that survey was made last year. Was it before the election or after? If it was made before the election, then surely the Prime Minister and the cabinet ministers were misleading the electorate when they announced their determination at that time to stand by the shelf concept. Even if the survey was made after the election, it must have been so soon afterwards that the words in which the promises were made to the electors were still fresh in the memories and minds of the Prime Minister and his cabinet ministers.

I want to quote again in connection with that matter; it is a quotation I have already given but I want to repeat it. It is from page 16 of the white paper and is as follows:

Such expenditures—

That is, the shelf concept of capital expenditures.

—would provide some measure of alternative income in the areas affected by declines in export markets, and thus would fight most of our depressions at the point of first contact, rather than after they have spread through the economy.

Surely the Prime Minister's statement of February 20 is a reversal of that policy. Surely such public works are needed now. Surely there are in Canada today areas affected by the decline in export markets. Surely if we are to fight a depression at the first point of contact, instead of waiting until it has spread through our economy, that time is now.

What are the reasons given in the Prime Minister's statement for the abandonment of this shelf? I want to examine them. It is not just that the time is not ripe. The reasons given by the Prime Minister indicate that they are much more fundamental than this matter of timing. They indicate a complete change of policy and a complete change in the thinking of the Liberal government. Let us take a look at the four reasons—if you can call them reasons—or excuses. The first reason he gives is this; and it is a reason that might have applied up until the election, but which certainly does not apply since then. The reason that there was no labour or material available for this public works program could have been true up until the early part of 1949. It certainly is not true today and has no application to the present time.

The second reason which is given on the same page is as follows:

We feel it is only whenever it might appear that private enterprise was lagging that we should stimulate public investment so as to maintain employment and prosperity.

If private investment is not lagging today when we have 400,000 unemployed in this country, then when will it be lagging? Surely that is no excuse for not applying that shelf concept at the present time.

The third reason is:

As a further practical consideration, adequate technical personnel to carry out a program of advanced planning over and above the regular departmental work was simply not available unless we attempted to compete for those who were capable of performing that work, with private enterprise that was already employing them.

There is no statement of that kind in the white paper of 1945. Pages of that paper are devoted to an outline of what the government was going to do, and going to start doing