

*The Address—Mr. Axworthy*

The Conservatives declare that it is a national Government, with its members elected from across Canada. However, when one looks at the impact of the Government's initiatives, one sees that the cuts it has introduced are in those areas where the private sector is not strong. The Government says that its reliance on economic growth will be on the private sector. We do not argue with that view, because the private sector has been the engine of growth in our country for most of its history. However, it should also be recognized that ours is a mixed economy, because this country is not the same throughout. One cannot see all of Canada from the top floor of an insurance company or a bank in downtown Toronto. The fact is that in many parts of this country the ability of the private sector to provide jobs is very thin. In some places there is almost a non-existent private sector or one that does not have the same kind of critical, dynamic mass to create jobs.

The basic position of our Party, which we will continue to take, is that it is the responsibility of the federal Government to provide a balance within Confederation and to ensure that the benefits of economic growth are shared by all Canadians and not concentrated in one or two areas. That is the reason we react so severely to the kind of cut-backs brought forward by the Minister of Finance.

● (1200)

Let me speak for a moment about my own city. In one way it provides an interesting composite of the kind of stupidity in which this Government is engaging and the lack of sensitivity to regional economic development. We talk about the necessity for all parts of this country to share in the new information technology and how the basic industries, whether forestry, food processing or the textile and garment industry, can become competitive. The way is for them to apply new technology to their products in order to get costs down and to allow them to compete in foreign markets. We also know that new technology really is the breakthrough, the leading edge, for new economic growth across Canada. There has to be a *Magna Carta* for the application and distribution of high technology.

What do they do, Mr. Speaker? In my City of Winnipeg, the Tories cancelled the National Research Council lab for applied robotics. What would that lab have done? First, it would have enabled another region of the country to become a centre for first-class research in the very important area of artificial intelligence and robotics, which has its primary application to small business. It was not an esoteric academic group because the lab designed to provide a place for business, scientists, researchers and engineers who would come together to develop new techniques that could be applied to the garment trade, to mining, and to food processing. Therefore, it could enable those industries in western Canada and throughout Canada to acquire new technology and to apply it to their manufacturing and processing bases.

A building was already under construction. Equipment had been ordered. People had been hired and were already in the city. What does this Government do? It slashes, cuts and

eliminates that area. What has been the impact of this, Mr. Speaker? Four major manufacturers, two of which were American, already planning to come to Canada to set up new businesses in the City of Winnipeg because of the application of that research centre are now changing their minds. This is a government that says it believes in economic growth and says that it wants to attract industry from other countries. This is a government that says it believes in fair and effective distribution. But by one stroke of the pen it has eliminated the economic future of Winnipeg. That is the kind of government we have. That is the reality and not the rhetoric that we are facing.

We have a government that does not give a damn about the regions. It does not give a damn about economic growth or regional distribution because it is obsessed by its own theology and so preoccupied with its religious catechism, which it has to recite every day as it appears before Rasputin of the North, otherwise known as the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Nielsen). Members of the Government have to repeat their loyalty oaths and their promises of silence and they have to say, "God bless the new catechism. Thou shalt not touch the private sector". What the Government has done in the meantime is to eliminate a very important investment designed primarily to work with the private sector to develop new technology and new robotics for future industrial growth in a major region of Canada.

How do you explain that, Mr. Speaker? How do you explain such silliness and insensitivity? This is a government that was going to consult and to confide in all Canadians. I did not find anybody in my City of Winnipeg, including probably the Members of Parliament from the Conservative Party, who were consulted about those cut-backs. If they were, they should hang their heads in shame for having been so insensitive and so disregarding of economic prospects. But this Government talked to nobody. It did not talk to the business community, the universities or the provincial governments. In fact, this Government denied every single one of the precepts, conditions and promises which it had made.

Let me speak about the question of confidence and consultation. I want to address my remarks to members of the Conservative Party who have been in their constituencies preaching this new theology. Let me ask them why it is that the President of the Food Products and Manufacturing Association, a very large industrial group in Canada, criticized the Government this morning for lack of consultation and lack of involvement when it made decisions relating to metric and to wheat pricing. Those people were not consulted. They were not involved nor were they asked for their opinion. This decision will result in higher costs and in major changes. Were they asked for their opinion or their judgment? Is this the new kind of consultation? Is this what we can now expect? Are we going to have Ministers of the Crown preaching from on high new sermons on consultation but going ahead and making decisions in total disregard and ignorance of the groups primarily affected by those decisions?