

The Address—Mr. Gagliano

Referring to the correctional system, the government stated, and I quote, Mr. Speaker:

But it is obvious that there are grave defects in the system and my government accepts its responsibility to rectify these quickly.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it is now up to the government to accept the responsibilities set forth during the electoral campaign and to begin to deliver on its promises, including those which it forgot to include in the Speech from the Throne.

The government proudly and rightfully talks about its mandate as if it were an excellent opportunity. Mr. Speaker, it is an excellent opportunity to suggest concrete solutions instead of making empty speeches as they have been doing so far.

According to the polls, the majority achieved by the Conservatives reflected a desire for change, not a miraculous conversion to the Conservative Party. The Progressive Conservative government has a very clear mandate to take action. It has a mandate to keep its promises, for indeed they were very generous and even impossible promises. One could even say that they were irresponsible promises.

Mr. Speaker, the government stated that the answer to all the problems of this country lies in consensus, and I quote:

A national consensus is also needed to reduce the persistent isolation of Canada's regions, to meet the challenges of economic and social disparity, to revitalize the strength of our traditional resource industries, such as agriculture, forestry, mining, the fishery and tourism, and to ensure that our critical transportation and communication links better serve the national purpose.

To me, those are pious wishes. A national consensus, but what about? And on what? We have yet to hear practical suggestions which might lead to a consensus. A national consensus! Would problems disappear as if by magic so that the government will not have to solve them? And then we are told, and I quote:

Future summits could address in more details issues such as the enhancement of productivity, and the responsibilities of industry, labour and government in training and technology.

Those are important issues which are put on the back burner, Mr. Speaker, such as the tens of thousands of jobs which were to be created the moment the new Cabinet was sworn to office.

• (1110)

[English]

The vocabulary of the Government is full of expressions showing it is in no hurry, expressions like "over time" and "following extensive consultations". I hope it does not substitute "lengthy" consultations for "extensive" consultations. Where is all the work that the famous Tory transition team is supposed to have accomplished? Why were there no new and solid policy proposals in the Throne Speech?

We heard during the campaign that with the swearing in of the Cabinet tens of thousands of jobs would be created. In the absence of any substance to that blarney, we could have at least expected there would be legislation to reduce unemployment; but no, instead of "jobs, jobs, jobs" we hear those heroic

Tory buzz words "study, consultation and consensus". Will the words "some time in the future" cure the unemployment problem?

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, I admit that some initiatives were taken last Monday, but they did not come from the Progressive Conservatives since they did nothing more than implement the initiatives of the previous government. For instance, deletion of discriminatory provisions in the Indian Act, repression of pornography, assistance to victims of family violence, and resumption of discussions on pension reform already launched by the Liberals. The government might claim to have some credibility if it had been able to fulfil the expectations of Canadians by implementing its own policies as a substitute for the Liberal policies it has adopted.

[English]

As for the meagre Tory input of the cure-all "consultation, mediation, co-operation, consensus" and above all "confidence", well, they are very slick buzz words but are a poor substitute for the type of credible and concrete prospects required to generate real confidence.

[Translation]

After the hue and cry raised against the problems created by the previous government, it is comforting, Mr. Speaker, to see that Liberal policies did make sense after all.

• (1115)

[English]

We all know, Mr. Speaker, that imitation is the highest form of flattery.

[Translation]

We thank them for the compliment.

[English]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there questions or comments? We shall then proceed with debate.

Mr. Ernie Epp (Thunder Bay-Nipigon): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to be here this morning to address the House of Commons of Canada in this Thirty-third Parliament. I wish at the outset to thank my constituents for the opportunity they have given me to stand here on their behalf and address the people of Canada regarding the many important concerns that face the people today.

Members giving their maiden speeches are inclined to say a good deal about their ridings. They talk about the people who live there, how they work and what they do. This morning I would like to address those topics in the context of the recent election campaign and of the expectations that have been raised and the hopes of the people of Thunder Bay-Nipigon expect the Government of Canada to maintain.

The people of my riding joined in a sweeping change that occurred on September 4 in the Government of Canada. Of course, they joined, as did the people of other northwestern Ontario ridings, in a rather different way than was true across