

*Speech from the Throne*

ble of providing and is not prepared to provide leadership.

The government wonders why it has not had a good relationship with the business community of this country. It wonders why it has had so many conflicts with the trade union movement—more, perhaps, than any government preceding it. It wonders why it is experiencing difficulty in getting along with the provinces. It need not look far for the answers, for we are being led by a man who believes, not in consultation and negotiation but in confrontation, who believes that the only effective way to deal with other sources of powers, whether they are in unions, in business or in the provinces, is to confront them, perhaps even ultimately in some kind of insulting fashion. Is that the way to exercise constructive national leadership in a country with so many different regional and provincial variations and distinctions?

In the 100 years or so that this land has been a nation, prime ministers and others have discovered that Canada is not an easy land to govern. They have discovered that only by conciliation, compromise, only by listening as well as by talking, only by building rather than tearing down, can the fabric of this nation be continued. The example of the last four years is not one that will hearten historians and show them how this country can be most effectively led.

Putting faith in a government that shows clearly it does know where it is going, that it is hardly aware where it has been, that it is not aware at present of what it is doing and really has no plan for the future, is putting faith in a government that governs by drifting. I believe Canadians are too intelligent, too well informed and too sophisticated to have faith any longer in that kind of government. The time has long gone when Canadians, for the sake of style, for the sake of novelty and because of titillations in the afternoon press, will support this kind of government as being one that is best in the national interest.

Perhaps nothing is more important to this country than our relations with the United States. Obviously, the clichés already uttered in this debate about our proximity to the United States and the intimacy of the relations between our two countries will continue to be uttered. It would take, not a volume but a whole library to catalogue effectively the indirect and complex relationships existing between us. It is altogether obvious that we cannot continue fostering this ongoing relationship in a crude and off-handed manner, or with simplistic statements, without doing great harm to the fabric of our relationship.

It was regrettable that the Prime Minister of this country, having decided that he should talk face to face with President Nixon, should have spoken on returning from that visit in glowing terms of the fantastic new breakthrough in understanding. How naïve must a Canadian be who can believe that because of a comment or a spontaneous reaction, a multitude of questions, issues and problems have been resolved effectively. Now, a few weeks later, we seem to be at the other end of the spectrum completely. The suggestion is that in fact the relationship between our two countries has reached a new low and trade talks have come to an almost total impasse.

[Mr. MacDonald (Egmont).]

• (1740)

In its kind of stop-and-go policy, the government suggests in one instance that it is preparing, as it says it has been for months if not for years, policies with regard to domestic control of the Canadian economic environment, or some such term as that, while at the same time the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) says that we will not do anything to prejudice or offend our relationship with the United States and, indeed, in terms of trade concessions we are prepared to make many more than we have already made.

What kind of games are being played with our economic situation, both in the present and future sense? What kind of child's play is this, where we can have this kind of suggestion in one quarter that nothing or less than nothing is going to be done, while in another quarter all kinds of things may be done with respect to national economic control? What is even more disturbing is that we do not know who is making the decision. Is it the same people who decided that in order to deal with inflation we could have a little slack and have a few hundred thousand people thrown out of work? Are these the people who are preparing some new kind of national economic policy, or are they the people who agreed with the Prime Minister's assessment in December that there had been a fantastic, new breakthrough?

Questions about the establishment of a framework for domestic control of the economy are just too important to be left in the hands of a small group of advisers, either in the Prime Minister's office or anywhere else. There are too many issues at stake, some of them much too important for the people of this country to believe that they can be developed in isolation.

It is rather interesting, and perhaps it is more than a little revealing of the true nature of this government that they referred in the Speech from the Throne to the isolation that Canadians feel. I cannot help but think it is some kind of Freudian slip, that in a sense it was not so much Canadians out there that this government was thinking of, but perhaps those who have laboured long hours in the east block, locked away from the reality of this country, manufacturing to suit their own purposes. They have indeed become increasingly frustrated about the isolation they have felt from this country.

Surely, those who for months and years have attempted to convey to this government their concern about rising unemployment, rising effective costs, those living on fixed incomes and those who have tried to communicate on the great social issues of our age have learned something about the isolation of this government. It is perhaps a paradox that never has there been such a large number of advisers and reflectors, and presumably some who have been listeners to the Prime Minister, and never has there been so little heard of what is actually happening in this country. At times the sense of isolation has appeared almost overwhelming. Frankly, it becomes terrifying when one thinks of this isolation in relation to basic decisions that will be made vis-à-vis our relationship with the United States and our decisions with regard to the domestic control of the economic environment.

If, indeed, that spirit of isolation exists, as it very much seems to exist at the present time, what follies are about