

The Address

since the same people or the same mentality will direct Canada's monetary policy.

[English]

Ms. Cohen: Mr. Speaker, I am again happy to stand in and answer questions that might more appropriately be addressed to the Minister of Finance. However, I can say to this House in response to the comments by the hon. member that Windsor—St. Clair did indeed suffer during the recession as a result of the policies of the former Conservative government. However, Windsor—St. Clair and the entire region managed to survive in spite of those policies. That survival was in part because of the vision of our community leaders and because of the vision of our local people who realized the importance of diversifying the economy and moving into other areas.

The appointment of a new governor at the Bank of Canada will not, I do not think, significantly change the progress that is being felt at the present time in our community. However, the attitude of the new government will change that and will assist in growth that I believe will be unprecedented in the history of my community.

Mr. Wayne Easter (Malpeque): Mr. Speaker, this being my first speech in the House, I want to at this time congratulate the Speaker on his appointment to the chair and also congratulate the other Speakers so appointed.

● (1915)

Your job, Mr. Speaker, is a very important one and I think especially so in this 35th session of Parliament because this country really is at a crossroads. Given the mix of parties and given the mood of the public, the Speaker's position I think will be very important in terms of balancing the debates and keeping order.

I must admit that I am somewhat awed to speak in this House, and to be quite honest that surprises me. I will explain why. This is a place where I did not expect to be especially on this side of the rail because as little as 15 months ago I was completely disillusioned with the House of Commons, with the government of the day and with the bureaucracies that serve the various ministries.

I was completely disillusioned with the process and the House of Commons and the government because I had spent the last nine years going before committees to give our organization's point of view and felt that it had been a waste of time and I had not been heard. As experienced parliamentarians like to call it "this place", I felt this place had lost touch with the people that it was supposed to serve. The election of so many new members this time and of a Liberal government with a plan of direction via the red book signifies that.

However, through the course of this Parliament we must ensure that "this place" becomes "our place" from the perspective of Canadians. I think all of us on both sides of the House have a responsibility in seeing that this place becomes "our place" from the perspective of Canadians, whether it is from what we like to call the emerald isle of Prince Edward Island, the province of Quebec or Saskatchewan. This place must be where the voice of Canada and Canadians is heard.

As I mentioned a moment ago that certainly did not happen during the last nine years. The throne speech speaks of providing members of Parliament greater opportunity to contribute to the development of public policy and legislation. That is perhaps one of the most important things that we can do. We can change the direction from the past and give people the opportunity to speak and be heard. It is a very important direction and a direction in which ordinary MPs can be given the opportunity to have some power in the House of Commons to speak on behalf of their constituents and their country.

Certainly in that context, giving ordinary MPs some power, there are differences. There is debate. We have seen that in the House already. That is what a democracy is all about. It is about the thrust and pros and cons of debate and out of that debate coming up with the best solution possible.

I want to take a moment to very sincerely thank the people of Malpeque for giving me this opportunity to work with and for them. My riding really stretches from Summerside, Prince Edward Island, bypasses Charlottetown and goes to the community of Marshfield. In my riding farming, fishing and tourism are the major industries and agriculture is certainly the big one. We have many small industries and two large potato processing plants, but as an island we are very dependent in terms of exports, be it potatoes or other products from the island.

I think one thing that is significant about Prince Edward Island is that it is basically a community of communities and we believe strongly in community spirit and helping one another in times of difficulty. I think we have to relate that to Canada as well.

I come from kind of a unique experience in that I have travelled this country during the last 20 years, the last 10 as president of the National Farmers' Union. I just wish that every Canadian could have that kind of experience. We are great at criticizing our own country. I have lived about half the time in Saskatchewan, but I have travelled across the country and have seen its potential: how great a country it can be if it remains united. When foreign countries look at Canada they wonder why we are fighting among ourselves and think that with our tremendous resource base, land base and people base we should be using them to good advantage in building a nation.