

The Address—Mr. Dinsdale

that seemed to be rising in the country just prior to the election, we are back just where we started from on prorogation last summer.

An hon. Member: Good.

Mr. Dinsdale: Someone says, "Good", but that depends on where you sit. I hope to analyse the situation a little further and present my viewpoint on it. As I went through the recent election I got the impression that Canada was enjoying what some might call midsummer madness; because we were going through a very important election and yet a very small part of the population seemed to be aware of the vital issues at stake. There seemed to be prevailing a holiday mood. I think some hon. members were themselves in a holiday mood and failed to return to this chamber through negligence on their part. There seemed to be an increase in the feeling of apathy that besets all levels of government in these very complex and confusing days. We see that apathy in municipal affairs, in provincial affairs and in federal affairs. We find in municipal affairs that year after year councils, school boards, reeves and mayors are returned by acclamation because of the lack of interest on the part of a large section of the population. I do not think we need remind citizens in a democracy that the apathy and the apathist are far more dangerous to the well-being of democracy than are communists and similar positive threats to our way of life.

Perhaps it was inevitable that the situation should exist because we are enjoying an unprecedented period of what I would term artificial prosperity on this continent. I use the phrase "artificial prosperity" because, compared to most other nations of the world, with the exception perhaps of our neighbour to the south, we are enjoying the highest standard of living that mankind in any nation at any time in history has ever enjoyed. That, of course, is due to many factors but mainly because Canada came out of world war II practically unscarred physically, and with a growing industrial potential. On the other hand, European and some Asiatic countries, particularly Japan, were badly devastated by the effects of the second world war. We enjoyed an unlimited demand for goods of all kinds; as the phrase has it, we enjoyed the position of a sellers' market. Moreover, and we hardly realized it at the time, although we are quite aware of it now, North America had become the centre of world influence and Canada was of necessity drawn into the orbit by the pull of the new position of the United States in world affairs. Our experience in international affairs before the war was not one that was worthy of any

[Mr. Dinsdale.]

degree of credit. In fact, Canada had hardly been aware of its international responsibility up until 1939—and even then there was some reluctance, as the history of those days reveals, for the government to commit itself wholeheartedly in the initial days of the crisis. Today, however, we have been precipitated into the stream of world events because of more or less accidental circumstances. Certainly, we should not take too much credit for all this as it is due to the isolated position of the North American continent in relation to the trouble spots of the world, and to the fact that we have here the richest resources of all kinds of any country in the world.

Our government has been stressing that material prosperity. It was used in the campaign, or at least in my particular corner, as one of the trump cards—that things were never better. I would like to emphasize this afternoon that I feel that we are putting too much stress on material well-being at the sacrifice of such things as the maintenance of democratic balance and responsible government.

There is another point that emerges from the situation that faced us at the election, and I refer to the matter of disfranchisement. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) raised the matter the other day in a question and the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) replied that he was aware of no situation of that kind. Well, I received several protests during the campaign and I think that this is an appropriate time to mention them in the house. I received, for example, a protest from the students attending the summer school at the University of Manitoba. They were not able to exercise their franchise because no special provision was established for them during this midsummer madness election. They, together with the director of the school, in no uncertain terms suggested that I make reference to it when I had opportunity. They are largely a group of school teachers who return for summer study in order to improve their teaching qualifications. As such they constituted a very important part of the electorate and they were very unhappy about the situation. Not only do they constitute a very important part of the electorate but usually they are very active and vocal in political campaigns. They were taken out of circulation because of the summer election.

On that point I would just like to say in conclusion that during the summer holiday period today we cannot undertake matters of major importance. We do not run our community chest campaigns during the summer. We do not conduct anything of importance