

The Address—Mr. Lessard

be running, so we could be in a position to make immediate changes from time to time to deal with problems of unemployment and inflation.

I fully agreed with the Minister of Finance when he said that solving problems of unemployment and inflation would not be easy. It will certainly not be easy. But this is precisely why the methods described in the Speech from the Throne are unsound. Mere declarations will not do the job. What we need is a whole new approach to economic policy making. We have stumbled along with high unemployment and high inflation. We must be willing to accept new ideas, to approach the concepts of price and wage controls if they should be necessary, to look at the whole question of capital flows and their effect upon exchange rates, to take account of the fact that the structure of the economy is changing drastically. The economy is very different in the 'seventies in its structure from what it was in the 'fifties or in the 'sixties; the Canadian economy will not respond to-day to the conventional use of monetary and fiscal policies as it did in the 'fifties and 'sixties. If we fail to recognize this we are doomed to live for years with unemployment running at 6 or 7 per cent, something which is totally unnecessary.

It seems to me there was nothing in the Speech from the Throne to indicate that the government had changed its mind about the way in which to deal with the problems of the economy. For this reason, I urge every member of the House, particularly members of the New Democratic Party to my left, to join with me and the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) in supporting the motion of non-confidence.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Lessard (Lac-Saint-Jean): Mr. Speaker, at the very opening of my remarks, I should like to join those who have spoken here in this House during the past few days and express my sincere congratulations on the great confidence which all members of this new House have displayed in the hon. member for Stormont-Dundas (Mr. Lamoureux) by electing him for the third time, which I believe is a record, to the high office of Speaker.

I remember with pleasure that when I arrived here in the federal parliament in 1962, it already seemed apparent to all that his ability would soon be recognized.

[English]

My congratulations are also directed to the hon. member for Halifax-East Hants (Mr. McCleave) on his appointment to the high office of Deputy Speaker. Certainly, he enjoys the confidence of all members of the chamber, and I wish him well.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, I also wish to congratulate the hon. members who have also been elected Chairman (Mr. McCleave), Deputy Chairman (Mr. Laniel) and Assistant Deputy Chairman (Mr. Boulanger) of committees of the Whole House.

As customary, I add my congratulations to the mover (Mr. Blais) and the seconder (Mr. Blaker) of the Address

[Mr. Gillies.]

in Reply to the Speech from the Throne for the skill and ability they displayed on the occasion of their maiden speeches and I am sure that their contribution to the proceedings of the House was, on this occasion, and will be in future highly appreciated by all. I wish them a long and fruitful political career.

Mr. Speaker, it is not so easy to achieve a long career in this House, since there are 99 new faces in this twenty-ninth parliament and there were 104 in the twenty-eighth. At that rate it soon becomes evident that the office of Member of Parliament does not carry great stability.

However, I welcome all these newcomers and congratulate them on the confidence they have deserved from their fellow citizens.

• (1700)

A new parliament has just started and the Speech from the Throne brought down by the government is in the opinion of all the best we have had in several years. Of course, it does not give the details of the legislation which will be introduced but practically every subject is dealt with. The document indicates what steps the government intends to take to correct the shortcomings and the errors brought to its attention during the election of October 30 last.

I thank specially the cabinet on behalf of all my constituents for the concern the ministers showed in respect of all classes of the society.

I would like first of all to make a short review of the agricultural situation and you will easily understand why.

To me, Canadian agriculture is more than an industry. It has been and it will continue to be in the years to come a way of life for hundreds of Canadians. Although a lot of things have changed in the organization and production techniques the fact remains that the very large majority of those involved in that occupation are in it because they like it and for them as well as for their families it is a way of life they would not want to give up and that we as legislators must protect.

We, Canadians, are privileged to have a country with a very fertile soil. We are also privileged to have enough men, women and children who choose this difficult occupation the value of which is not always recognized by city people. We must therefore examine seriously the adverse consequences that some of our decisions could have on agriculture in the immediate future and particularly for the years to come. If one refers to the information provided by the 1971 census, one sees that the total number of cultivated acres, as compared to 1966, has again fallen from 174,124,828 to 169,668,614, a decrease of 2.6 p. cent. Furthermore—and this should really worry us—the number of farms and farmers has registered a further reduction during the same period. In 1966, we had 430,522 farms in Canada, and now, in 1971, that is five years later, we can find only 366,128. More alarming yet is the decrease of the rural population, now totalling only 1,489,565 people, which means a startling reduction of 24 per cent within five years. In Canada the farm population in 1971 represents only seven per cent of the total, whereas it amounted to 10 per cent in 1966 and 12 per cent in 1961.

Mr. Speaker, such statistics should give us pause.