

[English]

In that country, the hourly-paid worker has been set against society at large, and that can never be a healthy thing for any country. The Canadian government has taken the position that we need policies to protect the working poor, to protect those least able to look after themselves, which is how it should be.

In the last session much was done. The Canada Pension Plan and the Old Age Security Plan have been indexed every three months, and of course family allowances were increased to an average of \$20 per child. Certainly all neutral observers take this as the reasonable road to combat inflation, and that is the road this government has taken—not a road which discriminates against one sector of the economy, inevitably the hourly-paid worker, and pits that sector against the rest of the country.

This Speech from the Throne is short and to the point. It covers specific areas to be dealt with by the government. As a Liberal backbencher, I find the point about this Speech from the Throne that is so gratifying is that it reflects to a great extent the views of the Liberal Party members of parliament.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stollery: Before I was elected it was a common enough remark that if you were elected as a Liberal, and the Liberal Party formed the government, you as a backbencher were ignored. That is categorically not true. Many government policies put into effect since I have been here have been initiated from within the ranks of the Liberal Party.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stollery: They are the result of a great deal of consultation with Canadians from all walks of life, and that is how it should be.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

Mr. Irénée Pelletier (Sherbrooke): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to be chosen by the Right Hon. Prime Minister of Canada (Mr. Trudeau) and his colleagues of the Cabinet to second the motion for the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

This honour is reflected on the constituency of Sherbrooke and on the entire area of the Eastern Townships. I am convinced, Mr. Speaker, that, regardless of political affiliations, the people whom I have the honour of representing in the House recognize the privilege which is mine today and share this happy moment with me.

This task holds even more interest in view of the fact that the mover of the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne is one of the young members of parliament who can express themselves admirably in both official languages of our country and who also speaks with great fluency the language of Cervantes. I am talking about the hon. member for Spadina (Mr. Stollery). I congratulate him for giving us such an example of perfect multilingualism.

The Address—Mr. Irénée Pelletier

I also share this pleasant moment with my parents, brothers and sisters in Acadia, because even though I represent a Quebec constituency in the House, I have always been proud, Mr. Speaker, of my native province, New Brunswick, and of the charming village of Saint-André de Madawaska, where I was born and spent the best years of my life. I am therefore very proud, Mr. Speaker, of my Acadian origin. Acadians—it is appropriate to note—have written one of the most moving pages of our Canadian history. They are a people who, in spite of the upheavals of history, be they old or new, have always kept the pride of their forebears and have greatly contributed to the economic, social and cultural development of the Maritimes.

For 22 years, a native Canadian has held the important position of chief of State and representative of Her Majesty in Canada. Following in the footsteps of great Canadians like Vincent Massey, Georges Vanier and Roland Mitchener, His Excellency Jules Léger brings to the prestigious position of Governor General of Canada a long experience as a diplomat who, with great ability, distinction and dignity, served Canada abroad for more than two decades. In the name of my constituents and in my own name, I wish His Excellency and Mrs. Jules Léger a happy and fruitful mandate.

Mr. Speaker, it is customary that the mover and second of the Address in reply refer to their constituency, its wealth, beauty and characteristics; it is a fine custom. However, I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that my colleagues will not bear me a grudge if I somewhat deviate from the tradition to deal firstly of course with the Sherbrooke constituency and secondly, to make some personal comments on a problem in which I am interested and which concerns an increasing number of people, that is poverty in Canada and throughout the world.

To describe briefly the many attractions of Sherbrooke is almost an impossible task. The third largest centre in Quebec—after of course the metropolitan areas of Montreal and Quebec City—Sherbrooke is often called the Ville Reine des Cantons de l'Est, a city of almost 90,000 inhabitants.

Sherbrooke and the Eastern Townships make up an agglomeration of more than 200,000 inhabitants, an area comprising nine federal constituencies that claim, like Gaspé, Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, the Mauricie and the Laurentians, the title of the most picturesque part of the Beautiful Province.

From a geographic standpoint, the original feature of the Eastern Townships is that they are the only urbanized area in Quebec (between Hull and Quebec City) to be situated outside the axis of the St. Lawrence River. It is a hinterland dominated by Sherbrooke which comprises nearly 60 per cent of the urban population of the area.

In short, Sherbrooke and the Eastern Townships are a town and an area of a rather important size which is endowed with institutions, customs and features of its own; in a word, which has a personality of its own and which makes it different from the other areas of Quebec and Canada.