

The Address—Mr. Thatcher

the rest of Canada, the workmen of my constituency have to be helped to meet the continuous rise in the cost of living and this appalling housing shortage.

The workmen of Three Rivers, ably directed by competent employers, have turned our fine city into the greatest paper production centre in the world. They have a right to expect that the present government will leave no stone unturned and will seek the most efficient means of enabling them to house their families in decent, adequate and healthy surroundings.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your indulgence.

(Text):

Mr. W. Ross Thatcher (Moose Jaw): Mr. Speaker, in a moment I should like to say something about the statement which the Minister of Reconstruction and Supply (Mr. Winters) made this afternoon about housing. I am sure that every member in the house found his statement interesting, but I am sure most people in Canada found it rather disappointing.

First of all, I should like to join with other hon. members who have congratulated the mover (Mr. Boisvert) and the seconder (Mr. Laing) of the motion which we are discussing. Despite the fact that I did not agree with some of the material they presented, I did think that they performed in an able manner the task assigned to them.

Several days ago I was sitting in one of the parliamentary offices talking to several Liberal members, among whom was the member for Coast-Capilano (Mr. Sinclair). He was rather elated over the election results. I could not blame him very much. I took a good deal of ribbing about the results in so far as the C.C.F. was concerned. During the conversation the member for Coast-Capilano made one statement which I thought was significant. He said, "I do not see how any member—that is any opposition member—after that election can say anything about the speech from the throne". I cannot agree with that point of view. While it is true the Liberal members should be very pleased with themselves, I do not think that they should become complacent. The opposition still has a duty to perform and that is to criticize, scrutinize and examine the legislation which comes before this house.

While it may seem ludicrous, I should like, therefore, to offer one word of admonition to the government early in this session. I believe that, in the huge majority the government has, there are certain dangers which it will be necessary for them to avoid in the ensuing four years if they are a wise government. They should avoid any temptation to try to steam-roller legislation through this House of

Commons. They should avoid any temptation to neglect the implementation of the election promises they have made. They should also try to avoid the danger of overspending and overexpanding, which is a natural one in these times of buoyant revenues.

As I said, I do not blame the government members for feeling satisfied, but I was a little surprised when I read the speech from the throne. I thought there was a shade of complacency in it. I draw to the attention of hon. members some of the phrases that were used:

At home we continue to enjoy prosperity. Investment and employment have remained at high levels. There has been deep satisfaction in all parts of the country.

Relations between employers and employees have, with few exceptions, been satisfactory.

I know I am biased, but it appears to me that speech contains too many platitudes and far too few tangible proposals to meet the needs of the country. In other words, I feel that this speech from the throne is a document of self-satisfaction, not a plan of action.

I refer specifically to the matter of housing, particularly in view of the fact that the minister made a statement this afternoon. I listened to him with interest, because ever since 1945 housing has been one of the most critical problems facing this country. The minister admitted in his speech that housing was extremely critical. A few weeks ago I was surprised to read an item in one of the newspapers about a brief which Central Housing and Mortgage Corporation presented to the Royal Commission on Arts and Sciences. According to the newspaper report, this is what the brief said:

The housing needs of the Canadian people have never been more critical than they are today.

I suggest that is a significant statement, Mr. Speaker, because the admission was made by the officials of a government agency. This problem of housing is anything but new. Back in 1945 a government advisory committee, I believe the one that presented the so-called Curtis report, stated that about 750,000 new homes were needed in this country. If my memory serves me correctly, it was also stated that an additional 60,000 homes should be built to keep up with the current demand.

What has been accomplished since the end of the war? During the election I heard Liberal speakers and read Liberal advertisements that took great satisfaction from the fact that approximately 275,000 homes have been built since the end of the war. This is a large number of homes. But during that time, many thousands of homes have become obsolete. In that period veterans have been coming home, many of them with war brides. At least 300,000 immigrants have arrived in