

*The Address—Mr. Lesage*

present government. I am certain that their requests, which have always been modest, will be given every consideration and that we will advance along with the whole Atlantic area and enjoy under this administration a fairer share of the national economy.

**Hon. Jean Lesage (Montmagny-L'Islet):** Mr. Speaker, my first words will be to compliment Mr. Speaker on his election to his high office. His legal and parliamentary experience and knowledge, his urbanity and affability commend him to the unanimous choice of this house.

*(Translation):*

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to take this opportunity, while you are occupying the chair, to congratulate you on your appointment to this significant post and to assure you of our conviction that you will guide the debates in this house with justice, fairness and impartiality.

*(Text):*

I wish also to congratulate the mover and the seconder of the address. They have given a good account of their ability despite the poorness of the material with which they had to deal.

I have read the speech from the throne a number of times with great attention. I have even tried to read between the lines. However, I must confess, Mr. Speaker, that I have failed to see in it the great things which hon. members opposite have talked about in such glowing terms. The first half of the speech from the throne is devoted to Canadian nationhood, Commonwealth solidarity, the Colombo plan, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the United Nations. On these subjects we all agree and there is nothing new in what has been said. As a matter of fact, there is not even the suggestion of a new approach.

Then the speech from the throne goes on with the somewhat trite statement:

... my ministers look forward to meeting next month with the leaders of the provincial governments in order to discuss fiscal relations.

Well, despite the importance of the subject and the pledges given by the Prime Minister during the election, we have in this debate heard not one word from the cabinet about the policy of the government in that field. Moreover, it is clear from the answers we have received since the beginning of this session that the government has no set policy nor is it preparing any proposals which it could lay before the conference.

It seems to me that serious study of these grave problems—and I am very sorry I have come to hold this belief—is as far away from the minds of the ministers as electioneering and partisan politics are ever-near and ever-

[Mr. Crouse.]

present. It looks as if the cabinet will be as far from ready for this federal-provincial conference as the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fleming) was for the Mont Tremblant conference. It is clear from the letter addressed by the Prime Minister to the premiers of the provinces on October 31 that the government is merely preparing the physical arrangements for a conference, the only accomplishment of which will be to prepare for another conference.

Then the speech from the throne mentions a bill providing for vacations with pay for workers under federal jurisdiction. We know now that the provisions of the bill do not satisfy labour completely. The speech also expresses the pious hope that new markets will be found for our fisheries and agricultural products, but since June there have been no signs that this hope will be realized.

The speech from the throne also mentions legislation to provide greater stability in the prices of farm products. I suppose this legislation will follow the resolution which is on the order paper. A careful reading of that resolution tends to show, having in mind the constitutional limitations of parliament, that it means nothing more than the continuance of the policy of price support. It looks like the same policy with a different setup and a more costly and cumbersome administration. After all, if you will allow me, Mr. Speaker, to translate from the French this addition of \$50 million to the revolving fund is nothing but "powder in the eyes" of the public.

Leaving aside for the moment the paragraph on national development and the subparagraphs on cheaper power for the Atlantic provinces, and the South Saskatchewan dam and the development of the Columbia river to which I will come later, what is left of the speech from the throne? The government is increasing its assistance to wheat growers and to the recipients of social security payments according to policies which have been developed by the Liberals; with the difference of course which I mentioned the other day that there is no increase for the recipients of family allowances in spite of the promises made by the Tories in Quebec during the last electoral campaign.

Oh, it is so very easy indeed to increase public expenditures, especially when no consideration is given to its possible detrimental economic effects or to the additional taxation it might involve. It was because of the inflationary pressures existing at the time, which still exist to some extent, that the previous administration did not feel it could do more than it did in those fields when it had the responsibility of office. However, the fact that the present government has