

The Address—Mr. Diefenbaker

its 11 per cent sales tax. The Minister of Finance was in Washington recently. There he met with members of the administration, and indicated that some miraculous information was given to him which might mean certain changes in the legislation that was passed by parliament at the last session over the protests of the opposition.

Then one looks back over the last session and thinks of the highly advertised programs which came before the house. They had to be modernized, revised or even withdrawn. The last speech from the throne did give an indication that something was going to be done. This speech from the throne totally lacks imagination. If one can mix one's metaphors, it is a speech of skim milk masquerading as cream. It reveals a government which has lost confidence in itself, confidence in its plans; a government which cannot overcome its irresolution by decisions, its incoherence by consistency, and which tries to lead the Canadian people into believing that retreat means progress. There is no indication in the speech from the throne that the exploratory surgery on the Canadian economy practised by the government at the last session is not going to be continued. These are serious matters when one has regard to what has taken place in the last few months in this country in practically every field of endeavour.

Mention was made a moment ago by the Prime Minister that there is an intention that there be a meeting of the federal and provincial governments in March; I am not sure of the date, but it is very close to the Ides. We know what that meeting will be like. Mr. Levesque is in town today, I understand. He has already stated that at that conference there will be a full course meal, and that the last one was merely an appetizer. I will be interested in hearing today from the Prime Minister of the plans he has; for certainly the course of action of this government in the short time it has been in power has been one of protestations of good will, uneasy concessions, and a creeping centralization described as co-operative federalism. As a matter of fact, during the last nine or ten months this government has been in office the fabric and structure of confederation has been weakened by having it dragged into the arena of partisan politics by the Liberal government in its desire to derive political advantage from division between the races. While the Prime Minister may smile, the fact remains that whenever he smiles I realize that the point I have made has been well taken.

This government by its action has actually given rise to sectionalism. This is a government which believes in centralization, which has still not learned its lesson that confederation must be built through the process of

consultation. Indeed, only today the Prime Minister admitted that as yet there had been no consultation in connection with the students' loan plan and already, as one hon. member suggested in a question, the premier of Quebec has commenced to ask himself questions in this regard.

The Prime Minister said yesterday that he would be making an announcement regarding the loan plan and some other plans he has in mind. So there will be no mistake as to what the promises were—and they were effective promises all across Canada—I read what he said as reported in the *Winnipeg Free Press* on March 8, 1963. The *Free Press* refers to him being in the city of Brandon:

Mr. Pearson warmed quickly to the casual atmosphere and in an impromptu 15 minute address said that the Liberal party would, if elected, establish 10,000 national scholarships of \$1,000 each.

I presume he is going to announce that today because, after all, he stated at that time in implicit terms:

In addition, he said, they would institute a system of bursaries and loans, which would be repayable, to help young persons obtain university educations.

Then he went on to say this in that relaxed atmosphere:

It would cost a lot of money, but not as much as just one of our destroyer escort vessels.

I presume that was the co-operation he got from the Minister of National Defence when he mothballed our navy. Oh, yes, those are some of the things.

I mentioned centralization. I am not going to deal with this today except in passing, but I do regard the action about to be taken by the Minister of Labour in giving Canadians nine digit numbers as a dangerous step. Every step toward centralization always begins with a simple matter. The only exemptions are farmers, house employees, clergymen and the like, and I say to him it is a strange thing that in 1964 the government of Canada is going to bring about a system of identification cards. In other words, call it what you will, it is a form of registration on a national basis which can lead to being synonymous with regimentation within the nation. I say that those who came to our country from other lands know that this step of national registration was indeed the first step along the way.

✱ I challenge the government to give serious consideration before it proceeds to give Canadians numbers. I said the other day that it would be very interesting for a notice to appear in the social column of a newspaper that a very happy marriage was performed last evening between Miss 987654321 and