

The Address—Mr. Trudeau

strong economically, is immune from disruptive pressures in strategic commodities.

In a world where law and its moral foundations are too often held in disrespect, we have learned that no society, no matter how democratic or politically mature, is guaranteed stability if elements in it become greedy, or unmindful of the rights, dignity and needs of others.

We have learned that in a world where terrorists and hijackers are protected by some governments, no community, no matter how peaceful, can safeguard the physical security of its inhabitants without their co-operation and understanding.

Here in Canada, Mr. Speaker, a growing population, better trained and educated and with higher expectations than ever before, a society increasingly urban-oriented and industrialized, has imposed its own strains upon nature and upon every social institution from the individual family to Parliament.

We are surrounded by changing circumstances in every facet of our individual and collective existence. Mr. Speaker, I might be tempted to say that the one thing that does not change is the usual complaint of the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) about a situation which he cannot resolve himself. It is a bit nostalgic, Mr. Speaker, to hear the same clichés and the same feelings of frustration invariably voiced by the Leader of the Opposition each time he rises to speak.

In the midst of change, Mr. Speaker, it is important for us as Canadians to understand the present reality so that we can control our future direction as a nation.

What is the Canadian reality? We are unquestionably a most fortunate people. Through no virtue of our own we find ourselves living in what, in relative terms, is the richest country in the world.

We can grow on our land more than we can eat. We can take from the sea more than enough for our needs. Perhaps alone amongst the industrialized nations of the world we possess adequate supplies of energy. Below the ground we have an abundance of minerals which world demand is making increasingly more valuable.

We are a strong and prosperous people, with human and natural resources sufficient to make us the envy of every nation.

It could not escape the notice of those who observed the federal-provincial energy conference last month that our primary problem as a nation is not war or shortages or famine, as it is in many other countries. Our problem is the equitable distribution of our most abundant wealth, and of the developmental opportunities which flow from that wealth.

It is important for us to understand our problems in the context of our strength, to know that we are in a better position than any other country on earth to create the kind of society we want for ourselves and our children.

Yet, despite our very high standard of living, there are continuing problems which Canadians expect a strong central government to remedy.

[English]

Although we are a prosperous nation, there are many Canadians who are poor and in need of help. There are

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many who, through no fault of their own, find it difficult to make ends meet. There are many who need better housing. There are regions which need help to provide jobs for their people. There are areas where better transportation services are needed for the efficient and economical movement of people and commodities.

In the past, Liberal programs have responded to these needs through such things as income support measures, urban development and housing policies, transportation subsidies and regional development funds; and now, once again, the House is debating the outline of a Liberal legislative program designed to respond still further to these and many other needs of Canadians.

Of all the problems facing Canada at the present time, however, the most personal, the most pervasive and the most difficult to solve—I was glad to hear those words from the mouth of the Leader of the Opposition or, rather, that thought if not the words—is the rising cost of living. Every Canadian, indeed every person in the world, is affected by inflation. Some are hurt very badly as they see their limited incomes steadily eroded by rising prices, parents as they learn of increases in the price of children's shoes and clothing, married couples as they see the cost of housing rising beyond their reach, elderly people whose diet is restricted by rising food prices.

Such social inequities should not exist in a country as rich and as prosperous as Canada. That it does exist is a challenge to us all, certainly to this government, particularly those of us who occupy positions of public responsibility in various areas of the public sector. It is a challenge to those in a position to influence public opinion, to those who exercise leadership in labour, management and the professions, to the powerful in all sectors of our society. The whole community, I would suggest, has some responsibility for creating an economic climate where many are hurt and the weakest suffer the most, for tolerating and even encouraging a social climate in which the ideals are not the conservation and sharing of limited resources but, rather, the stimulation of even greater consumer demand with everyone wanting to take more from society and to give less.

• (1610)

We cannot change such ingrained social attitudes overnight, but we can take hope from the evident desire of many younger members of our society to become more responsible stewards of the bounties of this land and to subordinate selfish interests to the cause of social justice.

It is the continuing intention of this Liberal government to bring about the equitable redistribution of our national wealth, to give to the weak who cannot protect themselves against inflation and to take from the strong who should not be allowed to profiteer from inflation.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Benjamin: Why didn't you say that three years ago?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I cannot identify the hon. member who talks about three years ago, but I understand he is in the NDP. I would like to recall, for those of them who were in this House three years ago, that they sat on