

I come now to the topic of agriculture, and ask, "Where can the Government claim any advance towards a permanent solution of our various agricultural problems?" Is it part of Government policy to count on the misfortune of rival wheat-producing countries in order for us to sell more wheat? One need only lend an ear for a moment to the grumblings of our eastern and western farmers to realize that they are profoundly dissatisfied with this Government and its characteristic ineptitude.

I doubt very much that the personality of the Prime Minister will ever again be sufficient to hide the shortcomings of the administration, as it did in the 1968 election.

I should now like to say a few words about a problem which is mentioned in the Speech from the Throne, as follows:

A society is said to be judged best by the compassion and the fairness with which it treats those of its members who breach or are accused of breaching the norms of conduct which it establishes for itself. The Canadian record in this respect is of a high standard, but not so high that it can withstand all criticism. You will be asked, therefore, to consider further measures intended to continue the reform of the law in these areas. Legislation has been prepared which deals with bail and pre-trial detention, and with the treatment of young offenders.

I want to make it crystal clear that I am in full agreement with such an outlook and that I share the Government's desire to attain these goals; but I cannot refrain from pointing out that Government action is, here again, late—very late.

The Government's wish to see laws more fairly and humanely applied is praiseworthy, for compassion is a virtue; but the Government must not forget that justice is also a virtue. We can feel open-minded about people who experiment with the drugs which some authorities would have us believe are relatively harmless, but we should not become permissive about our tolerance. I am glad that the Government has chosen, in the events of the past two weeks, to deal firmly with young people who are out to rape democracy, law and order.

It is not easy to identify and classify all the causes of the barbaric actions which were taken by the FLQ. What is especially worrisome is to find that some of the aims of the FLQ meet with approval in a rather large segment of the population, even though the methods they employ are condemned out-of-hand.

In a country like ours, which enjoys such a high standard of living, it is alarming indeed to find so many people who feel that they are being exploited, that their lot in life is so meagre that they really have nothing to lose by destroying that society to which the Throne Speech refers as

—a society in which human differences are regarded as assets, not liabilities;

—a society in which individual freedom and equality of opportunity remain as our most cherished possessions;

—a society in which the enjoyment of life is measured in qualitative, not quantitative terms;

—a society which encourages imagination and daring, ingenuity and initiative, not coldly and impersonally for the sake of efficiency, but with warmth and from the heart as between friends.

However, we can take consolation in the fact that a larger segment of our population believes, and I consider rightly so, that it would have a lot to lose in discarding our present system. Even if, in reality, it has not an image of our society as fanciful as the one depicted in the Speech from the Throne, and which I have just quoted, this larger proportion of Canadians not only disagrees with those who support the FLQ and other similar groups, but goes further and asks the Government to use all means at its disposal to prevent the flouting of our laws and to launch a frontal assault against mounting lawlessness.

Between these two objectives—that is, showing more compassion and fairness towards offenders, and fighting against crime efficiently—the choice is not always easy.

We know, for instance, that in the United States, the angry determination there to do something about crime is producing consequences likely to be felt for years—consequences that are entirely opposed to the course suggested in the Speech from the Throne, which is to continue the reform of the law, assuring a more lenient treatment of offenders, especially young offenders.

The United States Senate has passed a bill which sets up an unprecedented "dangerous special-offender procedure" in which the prosecutor can characterize a defendant, under certain qualifications, as a "dangerous special-offender". Under provisions that by-pass due process, the defendant can be given a term of up to 25 years in jail.

In the past two weeks, many opinions have been expressed to the effect that we should impose capital punishment for the crime of kidnapping and that we should re-establish capital punishment in the case of capital murder. Indeed, independently of what has recently happened, it seems to me that the commission of certain crimes might be discouraged by the threat of some kind of corporal punishment, and that crimes of violence probably deserve to be treated in the traditional fashion.

On the other hand, we must not allow ourselves to be unduly swayed by current events and the highly emotional reactions thereto, which tend to favour the establishment of a quasi-police state, because this course is fraught with grave dangers. We could bring about the confrontation of two philosophies so far apart that we might be faced tomorrow with all-out civil war.

We must hope that the Government and Parliament will not lose their sense of balance and that good common sense will prevail in the end, bringing about a satisfactory solution to a very difficult and anguishing set of circumstances.