

Canada in the tar sands the largest known reserves of oil of any country in the world. The reserves are greater than in the Middle East. Yet we have no crash program to get that oil produced. If we have to depend upon the importation of oil, as is planned by the government, it will have enormous negative effects on this country.

The exchange rate in Canada in the 1980's could drop to 75 cents. The government cannot be aware of the dangers in its current policy. It must be and I hope it will be changed.

What we require in this country is constructive production. We must have a budget policy to make it possible for the people who are producers in this nation to start producing again. If we do not, the trade deficit will increase, the exchange rate will fall, there will be more inflation and more unemployment. This afternoon the hon. gentleman opposite told us not to be gloomy but surely the only hope we have for finding solutions is to analyse our problems. Anybody looking at Canada from outside or inside has to conclude that we are facing the most serious economic crisis we have had since the depression.

The problems can be solved. The legacy of the Hon. John Turner as minister of finance was the attitude that nothing could be done. That was his motto of operations—do nothing. Of course something can be done. We can have a new budgetary policy based on needs of various sectors of our economy and that type of policymaking could give us a chance to turn this country around.

Referring to national unity, I am concerned with what the Prime Minister said about national unity in his speech because I am afraid that we may be trapped in rhetoric, language and words. He referred to the fact that there is no room for a third option and the people who are talking about a third option are making a big mistake. The Prime Minister should move around this country in order to find out what people are thinking.

In British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick people are looking for a third option. Let us not get caught up in the semantics of federalism. The reality in this country today is that people are not content with the constitution as it now stands and are not content with the manner in which federalism has been administered by this government. Also, they will not accept the interpretation, belief and understanding of federalism put forth by the Prime Minister.

If the Prime Minister suggests that there is not to be a third option, which is the way I read his speech, that will not satisfy the Canadian people. In my reading of his speech I see a suggestion that we have had a moving federalism, but the Canadian people do not believe this. They do not believe federalism has been flexible enough in the manner in which it has been administered by this government. They want a total new look. They want a total new look for this country, the way in which it is governed the constitutional relationships among areas of the nation.

The Address—Mr. Gillies

Associated with that demand and there is no question—and this must be a matter of great concern to everyone—that the Canadian people do not believe parliament is operating effectively. I have sympathy for the remarks made by the hon. gentleman opposite when he was referring to an elected Senate. We have to find a way so that the people in the regions of this nation can have an input into the making of federal policies. Perhaps one way to do that is through an elected Senate on a regional basis, but it must be a Senate with power. The people of Canada are aware of the fact that far, far too much of what goes on in this House is a sham. When the estimates come into the House, there is no one in the House of Commons who knows what that money is being used for and how it is being spent. The checks and balances of our system are not working. The legislative function has been destroyed to a considerable degree because so much has been taken into the hands of the executive. It is essential that we return a true legislative function to the House of Commons.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gillies: It is interesting to note that anyone who looks at any committee of this House knows that most committees find it difficult to perform their functions, except when they get a special reference. The committee which performs the best work in the House, by and large, is the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. Why is that committee able to function so well? It is because it has the Auditor General reporting to it. Why does that work? It works because the Auditor General has a staff and he is able to examine what is going on so he may bring relevant information to the Committee so it can do its work.

We can fool ourselves because we are very isolated in Ottawa, but the people know that the functions they think are being performed by parliament are not being performed. As a legislative body, when the people of Canada need to have trust in the functioning of their federal system, more than ever before in history, we must find some way to bring about reasonable reforms in the manner in which this organization operates.

It is indeed unfortunate that the government did not bring in an agenda of legislation with the Speech from the Throne. We must be the only organization in the world which cannot put together an agenda of what it is going to do and how it is going to do it. People are losing confidence in this body. We do not have much time to make major reforms before all confidence is gone. Committees will never operate unless there is a staff attached to them so they can proceed in a manner which has some real relevance to the conduct of the business of this country. We have lost the real element of checks and balances which makes a democracy work and work effectively.

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It may well be that in a simpler time, with a simpler form of government, that an election every four or five years was an appropriate form of check. It is not enough today.