

The Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark), speaking at the United Nations on September 25 with regard to aid policy and Canadian development assistance, said that "despite serious economic problems at home, we shall not turn our backs on the world's disadvantaged people". He went on to say: "Our new Government intends to maintain Canada's commitment to reaching .7 per cent of the GNP by 1990 in official development assistance". The Minister of Finance shot that one down in his economic statement, as he shot down the sacred trust of universality. Now the goal is not .7 per cent by 1990, but rather by 1995. This is beginning to sound just like the Liberals. In the early 1970s they had a goal of .7 per cent of GNP for official development assistance. That was consistently lowered to .6, .5 and .43 of 1 per cent of GNP.

Most seriously, will the electorate not again become cynical when our Government says very fine words and then reneges so seriously and damagingly on its promises? What has the Government done in the search for peace in the field of nuclear arms control and disarmament? So far it has not produced any ideas or proposals which would carry Canada and the world forward even a step. In his speech in Vancouver on October 20 the Government had the ambassador for disarmament say that the kind of progress the Government would make in these life and death matters would be inch by inch. In metric that would be centimetre by centimetre or millimetre by millimetre. Indeed, the very title of that speech was to the effect of reaching peace "inch by inch." I am sure that the ambassador was almost embarrassed to have to say this, but of course that is government policy.

The second shocking thing about the Government's policy is that it has totally rejected any unilateral initiatives that Canada can take in the field of nuclear arms control and steps toward disarmament. It has totally rejected our own historical tradition where we have, from time to time, taken unilateral initiatives. It says that those are no longer possible and we cannot take any initiatives on our own as Canadians, whether it is rejecting Cruise missile testing or bringing nations together to promote a nuclear freeze.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The Hon. Member's speech has now been concluded. We will proceed to questions and comments. In view of the fact that there are no questions and comments, I would like to call upon the Minister of Employment and Immigration.

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, may I congratulate you on the assumption of that very prestigious office.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Miss MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, this Government has taken office at a time when our society faces challenges and difficulties. These challenges and difficulties are without parallel in the history of most Canadians. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, this Government has taken office to meet those challenges and difficulties because the voters of Canada recognized that the old ideas and ways had reduced our economy to a shambles

and in the process had cost many hundreds of thousands of Canadians their homes, jobs, businesses, dreams, and even their hopes.

It is no wonder that when Canadians went to the polls on September 4 they did indeed vote for change. Hon. Members opposite have acknowledged this. With less than three score and ten of them, they have no alternative but to do so. The message of the electorate was unequivocal. The people of Canada voted for change. They voted for a government that they could believe in again, but they voted for more than that. They voted as well for a government that would believe in them.

Therefore, I stand in the House today to make my first speech as Minister of Employment and Immigration mindful of the enormous task of rebuilding and reinvigorating that lies ahead of us. However, I am confident that with the strength and belief of the Canadian people behind us we shall succeed in our duty. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, we must succeed in that duty. Unemployment of 11.3 per cent, 10 per cent, 9 per cent or 8 per cent is a tragedy that we cannot afford and must not tolerate. We cannot afford its continuing cost in human terms of ruined lives and the despair in many regions which is almost incomprehensible in a land that is so truly great—a land which we all grew up to believe held unlimited possibilities.

• (1530)

But that despair is real. It is the legacy of ministers and cabinets dedicated to the belief that the government—the bigger the better—knows best. It is the result of unilateral policies that promised one thing and delivered another, such as high interest rates, which ruined tens of thousands of businesses, put hundreds of thousands of people out of work and in three or four short years left a national debt which is both a millstone and an albatross around our necks.

No, the old ways will not do. They did not work in the past and they will not work in the future. The people of this country do not want them any more. They did indeed vote for change. They voted for a government which will meet the challenges of today and those of tomorrow; a government which will ensure that productive, remunerative, worth-while and prideful work will remain a fundamental element in our daily lives.

As Minister of Employment and Immigration I will accept no less objective. However, I want to emphasize that I do not underestimate the momentous task ahead if we are to achieve this objective. We know today's unemployment only too well. We all label it intolerable or unbearable, as indeed it is. What, then, shall we say tomorrow if hundreds of thousands more Canadians were to be left without work and without the skills needed to work because the technological revolution passed them by? What, then, would be the economic and social reality?

Over the past five years those ministers responsible for addressing this challenge either did not recognize it and its dimensions or simply did not care. Today we are paying for that failure and for that indifference. We are starting out already late in the race for the future. If we do not begin to