

*The Address—Mr. Macquarrie*

this: I had to go back to the Speech from the Throne to find something that was close to specific. It struck me that instead of telling us in specific detail what would happen, what the impoverished people of Canada can expect from this government, the minister delivered, rather, a position paper which was drawn up before the Speech from the Throne was delivered. I am now further from knowing, as I am sure other members are, what the government plans in this important field than on the day we heard His Excellency read the speech. Somehow there has been a reversal of priorities.

**An hon. Member:** Perhaps he read the wrong speech.

**Mr. Macquarrie:** My colleague suggests that perhaps the minister delivered the wrong speech. Perhaps he did.

As hon. members may know, I have been given special responsibility in the vast and important field of national health and welfare and I plan to discharge my duties as best I can, although I do not think even in the days of modern image makers I can pass as the epitome of physical fitness and become a household word to the youth of Canada in that regard. However, I can say that I kicked the smoking habit long before I heard of Judy LaMarsh.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Macquarrie:** Perhaps that is one of my attributes which qualifies me for my eminent position, in as much as I am following such an eminent minister as the Minister of National Health and Welfare, (Mr. Lalonde). This morning I was reading in the *Montreal Gazette* just how eminent he has become. We are told he is the architect of new social policy. Clearly, he is a very important man. What do they say about the Minister of Communications (Mr. Pelletier)? He is left on the beach. The Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand) we are told is no longer vital, I assume they mean politically rather than otherwise. And, the former solicitor general (Mr. Goyer) has been overtaken by change. So, I am now given the responsibility of following one of the giants of the new administration. It makes you think.

I thought he would tell us something about the olympic games. There is some confusion over which minister is responsible for that important exercise. I thought he might tell us a bit about what happened to the Le Dain Commission which used to hold us so breathlessly attentive in the previous parliament. I want to know, particularly, what is to be done for our old age pensioners. I had the fearful sensation throughout his speech that what the impoverished and underprivileged of this land would get would be another series of consultations and studies. Perhaps, under the new dispensation, they may even be called royal commissions. That adjective is now acceptable. I do not know what is to happen. Has the White Paper of 1970 been completely discarded? Is there no federal initiative at all? What will this government do regarding those portions of the social welfare program which are solely its responsibility. What will be done about old age security? I remember, not long ago, that the payment was jacked up by 42 cents a month. Will the new benevolence double that? Will the extra payment be brought up to the six buck level of earlier days of Liberal munificence? I fear that, while many will be impressed by

[Mr. Macquarrie.]

the minister's literary style, by the structure of his address, if the needy are looking for solace they will not find it in anything that has been said.

I want to be as positive as possible. I hope that there is on the part of this government, finally, a sincere withdrawal from the old politics of confrontation with provinces. Far too much of that went on. The dominion-provincial conference was a battle ground where you won your spurs by snapping back at the provinces. Of course, the entire realm of social welfare requires tremendous involvement on the part of provinces because our fathers, in their wisdom in 1867, gave to the provinces the burden of jurisdiction in this field but not the adequate taxation field. So, it has been a constant battle for them. There must be meaningful discussion with the provinces. It has been called for time and again by the leader of my party and others. Even if this were to be a deathbed conversion, and even if the newly converted were to be in office a short time only, it could be a positive good. I was disturbed by the frequent reference to words such as "further study, further examination". I jotted them down. Some are to start in April. Why? When in the world will benefits start to flow? The minister's speech, I think, was certainly no manifesto for action. I am afraid it was a highly literate stalling device. The government is stalling for time. There seems to be a good deal of that today.

It is interesting to note that people who are so "hepped up" in staying in office are so terribly slow in producing that legislation which will indicate where they are going.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Macquarrie:** Last fall it was declared that the country could not afford to lose the services of such people as sit opposite. One would think that logic, and the minister used the word "logic" a good deal in his speech, would compel the government to act, would compel it to introduce piles and piles of legislation and would compel the government to tell us what it will do with its stay of execution. Yet, Mr. Speaker, alas, there is no indication from the government that it is poised for action, that it is composed of a group of people finally awake to the inequities and inequalities in this country, determined to do something meaningful about them and finally willing to show compassion for the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who find it difficult to get along day by day.

There are people in Atlantic Canada, actually in all parts of this nation, who just cannot cope with grim economic realities. Are there to be increased benefits for them? We do not know if the government will do something for those people, or when. I still do not know what it will do, and they do not know. Will we see any moves regarding the old age security pension? Are we finally to do something in this field. I know it is not the minister's department, yet it should be of concern to him, but are we to do something about the war veterans? We are burying gallant men who have died and not received pensions to which they were entitled—

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Macquarrie:** —because of lumbering, inefficient, careless and cold bureaucracy somewhere. I hope there will be action at the ministerial level finally to process the