

The Address—Mr. Gauthier

Mother Nature and Father Time can be a fickle pair. They have their own laws; they make their own rules. They are not enforced by legislation nor are they enshrined in any constitution; but we break them at our peril, and the penalties are swift and harsh.

In a time of high technology, fax machines in our offices, mobile phones in our cars, satellites in space, perhaps we should remind ourselves that our very existence on this planet depends on a six-inch layer of topsoil, a little rain, the good Lord and the people who husband this fragile, productive and renewable natural resource. We cannot continue to treat it as we have been. To quote from the Speech from the Throne: "Canadians possess a unique sense of their relationship to the land, whose rich, vast diversity has shaped their values and experiences".

This Government can continue to produce the economic, cultural values that this country of ours has become renowned for. We must work together to make this happen. We are in a very difficult time.

I touched on two issues that are of concern. There are no doubt many more. Every Hon. Member in this House has a concern that affects those you represent. On a global scale, we have concerns with the Uruguay Round of GATT and the effects it will have. In the industry I represent, we need changes to the Meat Import Act so producers trading in the North American market are dealing with the same rules. We are not asking for favours. Canadians can be competitive with any producer or manufacturer in the world, provided they have the opportunity. Those of us in government must ensure that Canadians have the opportunity to bring out the best in themselves and their country.

I want to thank the House for its indulgence. I am confident the Throne Speech tabled the other day will lead the way for this Government to bring about the important changes needed in Canada for all of us and those we represent.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Harvey (Edmonton East): I heard the Hon. Member mention the punitive link between the large federal debt and high interest rates. I do not have an economics degree, but I do have a memory. I remember the last time we had tremendously high interest rates was in the early 1980s. Those interest rates fell, right through to 1986 and 1987. This was a time when the federal debt was increasing. While interest rates were going one way, the

deficit was going the other. Yet I am told that high debt means higher interest rates. Our experience in this country does not support that contention. On what basis does the Hon. Member attempt to draw that relationship?

Mr. Porter: I do not have a degree in economics either, but I have been in business all my life. I have attempted to make things work in the real world. I had to go to banks to borrow money. Do you know today that to put a pound of beef on an animal in a feedlot requires \$35 in interest costs alone? Those costs are reflected right through the system. They are passed on to the buying public.

When a government pays the amount of interest we are experiencing today, it has a bearing on the overall picture. Other factors come into play, such as global economies and inflationary pressures. Canadians will have to pay for the large debt in increased taxes and cuts in services that Members opposite do not want to see. The more we pay, the less we spend in other areas. This puts pressure on monetary policy. If I have less to operate my business, the banker is more reluctant to lend money. Pressure on interest rates tends to rise because the banks know there is more risk out there. In time, this will put pressures on us.

I do not understand socialist monetary policies. I hope I never have to. I live about nine miles from the Saskatchewan border. I know what a socialist government has done there. I have noticed what it has done in British Columbia. I do not want my family living under those conditions.

I do appreciate your question. I believe the federal debt and the interest charges it incurs have put pressure on our monetary system.

• (1750)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to speak to the Throne Speech pronounced by the Governor General on April 3 when she opened the second session of the thirty-fourth Parliament of Canada. The Government, which of course prepared the speech, seems to have asked some unknown up in the attic of the Langevin Building, on the other side of Wellington, to write something which, as far we can see, is completely detached from the realities of this world and bears no relation to the needs of Canadians.