

Honourable senators, the Retirement of Senators Act provides one further option to senators holding life commissions. It is available only to those under age 75, and must be exercised within one year from the coming into force of this act—that is, by June 2 next. This option permits eligible senators who so desire, to come under the provisions of the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act. The effect of this option is to place senators who elect such a course in exactly the same position as senators appointed after the passage of the Retirement of Senators Act.

Honourable senators, it is with some reservation that I have spoken at length of the last Parliament, and of the statute which has so many implications for the membership of this chamber. I have done so in order that there be on record a summary of how the act operates, and I am prompted to do this by the large number of queries received about the effect of the new legislation. I hope the summary I have given will be of assistance.

Turning to the Speech from the Throne itself, one finds in it, first of all, a confirmation that the increase the last decade or so has witnessed in the workload of Parliament continues unabated. The speech has come in for considerable comment, much of which appears to centre on the fact that there is little that is “new”. Be that as it may, I am sure most honourable senators will agree that it contains much that is “necessary”, and this, I believe, is a more valid point of view from which to examine the contents of the speech.

The same comment has been made with respect to the Speech from the Throne given at the opening of the Quebec Legislature yesterday. Nobody seems to be satisfied with a Speech from the Throne unless it contains something completely unexpected.

For example, the Speech from the Throne proposes parliamentary consideration of such subjects as banking, railways, agriculture, fisheries, rural development, reorganization of government departments, fiscal arrangements with the provinces, the Canada Assistance Plan, assistance to universities and university students, training allowances for members of the labour force, medicare and many other subjects as well.

These are subject areas of great importance. I know I speak for all when I say the Senate stands ready to give these matters its closest and most constructive attention. And while it would be too much to expect that there will be unanimity in this chamber over

the courses of action the Government will be proposing—indeed, I am not sure that such unanimity, even if attainable, would be desirable—I am sure that our differences in outlook will be sincere, and the positions we adopt will be taken in the interest of Parliament and Canada.

Honourable senators, we must await the appearance of the resolutions and bills themselves in order to have the information that is necessary for a complete assessment and judgment of the Government's proposals. However, in anticipation of these details being made available to us, there are several matters referred to in the Speech from the Throne that I would specifically draw to your favourable attention.

The Speech from the Throne contains the sentence:

Our country is enjoying an unprecedented period of prosperity and growth.

This deceptively simple statement is the key to much of what is proposed in the Throne Speech. It also sums up an amazing economic performance by the country. The year 1965 saw the broadly based economic expansion we have been enjoying, not only continued but in some areas accelerated. Final figures are not yet available, but it would appear that last year our gross national product increased a shade faster than the 8.9 per cent growth rate of 1964. With price changes excluded, real output rose by over 6 per cent, following gains of 6½ per cent in 1964 and 4½ per cent in 1963. The value of our gross national product in 1965 was for the first time in our history more than \$50 billion. This rate of growth is encouraging in itself. It is also encouraging in comparison with the rate experienced in other western countries.

In respect to the labour force, the year just passed has been one of progress and continuing improvement. Unemployment dropped to the lowest point in nine years, and the unemployment rate for the year as a whole was 3.9 per cent. In recent months it has been significantly below that level.

I believe it fair to say that with the national rate below 4 per cent, the dimensions of the whole problem of unemployment have been substantially reduced. In fact, the combination of increasing job opportunities and declining unemployment has produced labour shortages in certain occupations and areas of the country. Our responsibility more and more lies in developing programs to aid those areas of the country and those people who