

I want to start, and I think it is appropriate that I should, on a constructive note because there are always things in any government program which many people find attractive and agreeable. The first theme that is expressed in the Throne Speech deserves our widespread support, that is, the theme that expresses the desire for peace—the peace initiative—and the several proposals which are put forward in this speech as to how we may carry our progress toward that goal more effectively in the time to come. This carries the hope of mankind. I could not have expressed as eloquently and as impressively as Senator Hébert did the reasons why we Canadians have a special responsibility to take this part of our duty to ourselves and to the world seriously, indeed.

Parliamentarians may regret that for reasons which entirely escape me, it was decided to announce the new initiatives of the government at a political fund-raising dinner when it would have been more appropriate, I think, to have expressed them first in Parliament and to have endeavoured to secure the wide parliamentary support which I think they deserve. But let us put that to one side. The object is peace, and we stand for peace. It is a noble pursuit and we must hope that the outcome will be productive.

When you come to the second theme that the government has encompassed in the Throne Speech, the one dealing with the question of economic growth, then I am afraid that I cannot be quite as complimentary as I have been thus far. If it is subjected to any sort of critical examination at all, then I think serious issues of credibility arise. Can we believe what we hear? Can we trust what we read? We recognize these familiar noises which I spoke of previously. We have heard a great deal of this before and the task of the opposition and, indeed, the people of Canada, in reading this Throne Speech, is to separate the appearance from the reality. That seems to me a task to which this house could well devote itself.

Of course, promises in Throne Speeches are expected. Promises and Throne Speeches go together, particularly when they are preceding a general election. There is something in it for everybody and, therefore, I suppose everybody should be happy. But there are certain tests that should be applied to a document like this—the tests of credibility and performance. Here is where we return to the prorogation speech, because that speech outlined the record of performance of this government as they would like it to appear. I think it presents a sharp contrast not only when compared with the throne speech of 1980 but with the Throne Speech of 1983. In fact, as you analyze these two documents placed before the house in the past week, the prorogation speech and the Throne Speech, I think they pretty well give the government's hand away.

In its prorogation speech, the government had something to say about the economy that is perhaps worth reading to you now. Under the subheading "Meeting the Challenges of World Recession" the following appears in the prorogation speech:

The Canadian response to these troubled times has been, not to retrench, but to meet these greater challenges through a more effective mobilization of our resources. The Government took steps to protect Canadians as much

as possible from the ravages of international recession, and to battle domestic inflation.

Pretty good stuff.

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They come along again in the Throne Speech and deal with the same topic to encourage economic growth so that more Canadians can own a home, learn a trade, expand a business, participate in the ownership of our resources; and gain a fair share of the abundant benefits that this country can provide. I think any politician could have written that with a clear conscience. But whether or not people will agree with the sentiments as expressed when compared with what happens is something else again. The same kinds of sentiment were expressed in the Throne Speech of 1980.

In the Prorogation Speech of 1983, all mention of the sad times we have experienced since this government came to power was tactfully omitted. Listening to the Prorogation Speech and listening to the Throne Speech, no one would believe that this administration has presided over an economic débacle without equal in the history of this country in the last 40 years—since World War II. No one would believe that Canada suffered the greatest decline in gross national product of any of the seven western industrialized nations during the 1981-82 recession and that Canada's decline was more than twice as bad as that of Italy, the next worst. Those figures may be extracted from the economic review of the Department of Finance issued in April 1983.

When you reproach them for their economic policy, the standard defence of the government is to blame someone else, either Europe or the United States—and mostly the United States. Yet, what do the figures tell us? A much different story. Our inflation today is 4.9 per cent. That is a tremendous improvement over what it was, so let us be grateful for it, but it is double the inflation in the United States which competes with us for our domestic market and in whose market our exporters have to compete. Unemployment has been higher and is still higher in Canada, percentage-wise, than it is in the United States. Since 1980, Canadian job totals increased by 1.5 per cent; over the same period in the United States they increased by 3.5 per cent—again more than double. In terms of productivity, in 1982 Canada was the worst of the seven major industrial countries and worse than any of the 11 countries of the European Economic Community. In other aspects of economic measurement which are important, such as our manufacturing capacity, we cannot keep up to the United States.

In all these issues we can admit that Canada is greatly affected by what goes on in the rest of the world. Let us not try to minimize that, because it is true, but how can we explain why we do so much worse and particularly worse than our neighbour, our principal economic partner, the United States? We must be doing something wrong ourselves; we cannot attribute it to the economic troubles of the great wide world.