

*Speech from the Throne*

government has been inclined, give some impression and impact of its style, but when examined in some detail, as it has been by the press and members of this House, they are found to be hollow.

Marshall McLuhan, the communications guru of our time, has coined a phrase in regard to television, but I think it could appropriately be used with regard to the Speech from the Throne. He said, "The medium is the message". In other words, Mr. Speaker, it does not really matter what is in the Speech from the Throne—I think that has become pretty clear—but it is how you say it that is all important. There may be some who derive satisfaction from this; those who have been cloistered for years in an arid, academic community or those who like to play with words so much that the meaning behind them or the issues or the people or the circumstances related to them are almost completely unimportant.

Some time ago a documentary film on the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), entitled "The Style is the Man", was shown, I think that sums up what we have seen in the Speech from the Throne, and perhaps in some measure the Prime Minister's remarks in this chamber last week. This was all very attractive and enticing in the years of his accession to leadership and in the election of 1968, but it strikes me, Mr. Speaker, that Canadians who have been buffeted by the winds of economic uncertainty, by the unpredictable and rapid increase in prices and the difficulty of relating their own incomes to them, and those who have become unemployed, have found small comfort in the substance of the style that was being presented to them month by month and year by year. I think we have come to the point, and certainly many Canadians have long passed it, of realizing that style alone, that efficacy in itself, is not sufficient to meet chronic, long-term economic and social problems.

We have seen very clearly in this kind of ad hoc, patchwork-quilt suggestion contained in the Speech from the Throne or list of bills tabled, that this government which has been in office for four years, and the party for nine, has yet to present to this country a consistent, over-all national economic and social policy. In fact, Mr. Speaker, it has even been reluctant to grapple with these problems in any kind of honest, straightforward way. If there is anything that Members of Parliament should be concerned about in this debate, it is lack of national economic policy. I think that underlies the fears and anxieties felt by all Canadians. The discussion should centre upon possible trade negotiations between Canada and the United States, the actions that might be taken by federal or provincial government with respect to economic policies in regard to foreign investment and foreign control and the Canadian economic enterprise.

• (1730)

Underlying that kind of concern is the open awareness that there is in this country at this time no over-all guiding policy, and that in the discussions initiated by this government with the provinces there has been a less than candid discussion of the basic strategy underlying a national economic policy. It is because there is an absolute and complete lack of national economic policy on the part of the federal government that the party I support and many Canadians ultimately condemn this government.

The Speech from the Throne made last week indicates no new effort or initiative in developing a national policy. In the last few years this government has engaged in ad hoc planning. It has given ad hoc promises and governed by crisis. It has always struck me as strange that this government, which speaks so eloquently on how it has survived crisis after crisis as if it has done something wonderful, should fail to point out something that any clear-minded or reasonably objective examination would reveal, namely, that the government was often the reason and cause for a crisis and that it had created a crisis over issues that in most cases deserved cool and rational consideration. The government simply was not capable of giving such issues cool, open, honest and rational consideration.

I cannot, for the life of me, understand why the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance or other members of this administration would point out how successfully they have coped with crises that were self-induced. They are engaging in the height of self-illusion. I hope that this delusion extends only to the members of the cabinet and not to the country at large. Whether the crisis was one of inflation, unemployment, or unrest in Quebec, to a greater extent than most of us realized at the time the crisis was government-induced and blame could not be attributed to any other source.

In the economic sphere, and particularly in our relations with the United States, the crisis mentality has been central and must be taken into account in understanding why this government has been so ineffective. Last week the Prime Minister said how effective the cabinet was in dealing with the recent trade and economic crisis involving this country and the United States. Yet it was that very same Prime Minister who felt no sense of responsibility when making the kind of stupid remark that he made in a foreign country. It was the same Prime Minister who, at a university campus several months prior to that, talked about violence and retaliation in the United States and, in general, gave the impression that he was somehow or other not terribly keen to understand the problems of that country or to work in a constructive way with those who had responsibility within the administration of that country.

The Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker, cannot have it both ways. He cannot expect, on the one hand, to fan the flames of misunderstanding and antipathy and, on the other, at the same time take credit for being cool and for dealing with difficulties which have arisen between our country and our southern neighbour. His remarks constitute an elaborate—perhaps they are not so elaborate—cover-up of the basic incompetence and irresponsibility of the government. There is no national plan, national strategy or elaboration of goals. There is no overview of what this country should be doing, where this country should be going and in which areas the government of this country should be providing leadership.

It is incredible to consider that with the large staff of the Prime Minister and the formal and informal think-tanks which have been attached to the Prime Minister's office, there has been so little articulation of what is the long-term direction of the leadership that ought to be and is being provided by this government. One can only assume at this late time that this government is not capa-