

*The Address—Mr. St. Laurent*

I believe the citizens of the constituency of Beauharnois can be proud of the member they chose in 1949 to represent them in this house.

(Text):

Those of us, and there are many, who know something of the background of the hon. member for Yukon-Mackenzie River, Canada's largest and still most remote constituency, were not surprised to hear him extol the part of the country from which he comes, its rugged beauty and its rich resources. With the exception of the years when he served overseas in the Canadian expeditionary forces in world war I, he has spent most of his life in the Yukon Territory. Before running for parliament in 1949 he was the collector of national revenue, immigration inspector, magistrate, judge of the juvenile court, and had been president of the Whitehorse board of trade and member of the Whitehorse hospital board. The hon. member made a speech which I feel sure we all listened to with interest and, I may add, with gratification. We, too, believe in the future of our north country. We all feel that it is fortunate for the people of the whole of Canada that their representatives in parliament continue to be men and women who not only have a broad grasp of current public affairs, but are men and women of vision who have confidence in the future of our country. With this in mind I repeat I am very happy to extend sincere congratulations to the mover and the seconder of the address.

We have also listened with interest to the speech by the leader of the opposition. I am not sure that, in spite of what he has said, he has succeeded in making his motion anything but a motion of no confidence. That, Mr. Speaker, will be for you to consider. If it is not a motion of no confidence it probably is not in order at this time. I believe it would be unfortunate to have the discussion of the matter which occupied a substantial portion of the hon. member's time, that of inflation, dealt with in the context of a motion of no confidence, because it so happens that this is a matter which is giving us all grave concern. There are many of the hon. member's friends who, for other reasons, perhaps, do not choose very often to assert confidence in this government, but who feel that the policies we have been following are in fact the right policies at this time. I must confess that there are many of our friends on this side, and in that other corner of the house near Mr. Speaker, disturbed at the fact that the government has not been able to devise any more effective measures of combating inflation than those which have been so far proposed to parliament.

This is not a matter upon which there have been the usual divisions between those who support one party or another, those who support the C.C.F. party or the Social Credit party; but it is a situation in which all of us feel the pinch of these higher prices and none of us likes it. Now, with regard to those who have been suggesting that the government's refusal to introduce direct price controls is a matter of stubbornness or a surrender to vested interests, let me say this. I do not often have the opportunity to go to the *Globe and Mail* for authority for any of the positions taken by the government. But it so happens that on September 27 last, in an article which is entitled "Cold Common Sense," the *Globe and Mail*—which I am sure for that reason has not lost its liking for the leader of the opposition—had this to say:

It was not a statement of policy that Finance Minister Abbott made this week in his radio talk on price control. It was a statement of fact. He was not merely saying that the federal government would not control prices. He was saying—and he was perfectly right—that the federal government could not control prices. Neither could the Conservatives if they were in office. And neither could the C.C.F. Nobody could.

The article went on to say:

On the face of it, it is most unfair and unreasonable to suggest . . . that the government's refusal to introduce price control is a matter of stubbornness, or a surrender to vested interests. Such criticism not only misleads the public, but misrepresents the government. The government's refusal is a matter of cold common sense. It is taking the only rational attitude there is to take. It will not attempt to do what cannot be done. It will not embark on a program which at this time and under these circumstances can only succeed by destroying the last vestige of personal liberty.

With respect to the assertion that the Conservatives, if they were in office, could not do it, and the C.C.F. could not do it, they say:

Mr. Abbott rightly drew attention to the British experience. That country has a highly organized system of price controls, subsidies and rationing. And what has happened? Prices have risen faster in Britain, during the last six months, than they have risen either in Canada or the United States. Government leaders admit that the system, long overburdened, has broken down.

I do not want to criticize what has been attempted elsewhere, but I think we are entitled to examine the results that have been achieved elsewhere and to determine, in the lights that are ours, whether we could expect to realize from the same methods better results than others—who, I am sure, have been operating with as great ingenuity as we could display and with as great devotion to the public weal as we could display—have found it possible to achieve. That is the situation in the United Kingdom, and it has been the situation for many months.