

*The Address—Mr. Broadbent*

its disposal for them to develop their capacities and talents, for them to have a qualitatively rich life, and for them in their private pleasures or their co-operative endeavours to have a higher level of human existence.

I should like to refer to something which is key or fundamental to the notion of equality. Our young people, whether they be in Cape Breton or on Vancouver Island, in southern Ontario or anywhere else in the land, ought to believe that they have the same chance of fulfilling their aspirations as anyone else.

When we read a novel or a short story by Alice Munro, watch Wayne Gretzky, listen to Angela Hewitt, or see a new movie by Denys Arcand, we as Canadians are proud of the high level of creativity in our land. I have simply named four people in diverse fields who have achieved not only high Canadian standards but high standards in the world. Canadians are proud of such accomplishment. In this context I say particularly for those who have come of age since World War II, that what they expect is for all of us in this land to have equal opportunity to reach such high individual standards of performance. That is key.

Finally, I think what the people of Canada anywhere in our land want is fairness. They do not want a free trip. They do not want something for nothing. A distinct minority wants that, just as I think it is a distinct minority who is greedy. The average person simply wants fair treatment. He or she wants fair pay for a fair day's work. People want a fair chance to get ahead to be whatever, a good plumber, a good hockey player, a good violin player, a good novelist, whatever they can be on the basis of that broad and pretty understandable criterion of fairness. If we take these broad goals, Mr. Speaker—and I do not think they are nebulous because they are broad—I think that we should apply them to the Throne Speech. We should have a look at our nation and ask the question, where have we been going? Have we really made progress in the implementation of these kinds of values without miraculous expectations or have we been going in the opposite direction? I think that when you look in a hard way, without gloom and doom but without rose coloured glasses either, but look honestly at what has been happening, it is not encouraging of the notion of equality and the concept of fairness.

● (1410)

Let me digress just for a second. If you say that the real test of a government ought to be what it was while in the 19th century when democratic governments first came into being, what was talked about then was that the goal of a democratic government ought to be to maximize the wellbeing of what then was called the common man. We have made some improvements, thank God, since then. We no longer use the phrase "common man". We are more likely to say the average man, the average woman or the average family. Without doubt the goal of democracies has been to use power fairly. The appropriate goal has been to use political power not to preserve elites, not to extend special benefits for those who already have

them, but to use political power to break up some of those unfair advantages, to change the law which gives an unfair distribution of power and income in society to make it possible for the ordinary person to realize himself or herself.

It is for this reason that one asks such basic questions of a Throne Speech. Is it more likely that a farmer is going to continue farming as a result of this? Is it more likely that a young couple starting out in this land of ours is going to be able to buy its own home? Is it more likely now than 10 years ago that the son or daughter of a cab driver is going to be able to afford to get to university? Is it more likely that the gap between the rich and the poor, not only between the rich and the poor but the growing gap between the rich and the average in Canada, is going to be reduced? I think that if you ask these questions, Mr. Speaker, in looking either at the performance of this Government over the past two years or at the specifics, more particularly the absence of specifics in the Throne Speech, I regret to say the answer to all of these questions is in the negative, that the cab driver's children are facing a situation totally different from that which existed when I graduated. They can hardly afford the fees to go to university. If they come out of university, not only are wages in the manufacturing sector 5 per cent lower now than they were a few years ago but it is almost impossible to get a job. Women, contrary to some of the mythology that a lot of well-meaning people believe, still have the lowest paid jobs. Regrettably, the tendency is getting worse not better. The gap, as I indicated a minute ago, has not been changed yet by this Government. It is not even committed to change in the Throne Speech. The gap between the rich and the average in the country, not to mention the gap between the rich and the poor, will widen and not narrow.

I say that any test of fairness about Government—what democratic government is all about, especially in this very rich land of ours—that comes up with this conclusion should cause a government to move quickly and profoundly in concrete detail to change this pattern. But the truth is that Canada is becoming not more fair but less fair. The truth is that this need not be the case. The truth is that we had better start going in the opposite direction, let me say to the Prime Minister.

I just want to spend a few minutes on each of these particulars, to minimize in this context, if you like, the rhetoric but to raise what I think are appropriate questions that ought to be raised at this point in our history, such as about jobs and wages, for example.

I have already indicated that the recent trends are not encouraging. Wages in manufacturing are going down not up in comparison with the past. Women continue to be overwhelmingly working in low paid jobs. But what about jobs in general, without making the distinction in some circumstances that we ought to be making between men and women, and we must always keep in mind the inequality that women are experiencing?

I always ask myself when I see this kind of Throne Speech or Budget brought down by Ministers of Finance in the past,