

The Address—Mr. Stollery

Mr. Stollery: Mr. Speaker, I have learned a good deal since I became a member of parliament and arrived in this great school for Canadians. Probably the most important thing I have learned has been something of the differences and disparities in this great country of ours. When one reads about regionalism in the newspapers, it does not seem to be very important. However, when one comes to this House of Commons, hears of the various interests represented here covering all areas of Canada and sees the representatives of 265 constituencies in one room, this is a great education to a person as a Canadian.

From Toronto it is a long way to Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Calgary and Vancouver. Last year, when beef prices increased, I prepared a paper for my constituency in the form of a newsletter. I tried to explain some of the difficulties farmers had in producing grain and beef. I think I learned a great deal about the west in the course of discussions with officials of the Department of Agriculture—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Stollery: —and other members of parliament regarding the complexities of life of the western farmer about which, of course, I was not aware.

Toronto is a consuming and manufacturing area. Several months ago while attending a meeting I was fascinated when listening to a series of speakers on the difficulties related to transportation in western Canada and some of the inequities. Until then I did not understand that decisions which are made in board rooms affect every westerner. The price of manufactured articles, which is decided to a great extent by the cost of transportation, is not as closely controlled by government as it might be. It was made very clear to me that there is something very wrong about the transportation system in this country. All the complaints I have heard in this House have not been merely political complaints but have been related to some very real problems with which we must deal.

For years I have believed that in the national interest, transportation costs should not cause great disparity in any country. Many countries of the world which operate on this precept know that transportation costs are not as important as national unity. When I speak of Canada, I include the Arctic. If we are to encourage development, transportation costs must be subsidized. I note that in the Speech from the Throne there is a clear declaration that steps will be taken to end discrimination in freight rates. I hope this will be well received in western Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1440)

Mr. Stollery: Canada's approach to international politics has always been, since the days of the late Lester B. Pearson, admired by the world. I am sure it must come as a pleasure and something of a surprise to learn that we are not just respected because of our diplomatic leadership; Canada nowadays is also respected as a financial power and as an important trading nation in the world. International organizations such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development treat Canada with great respect. It is unusual that a country is first a diplomatic

[Mr. Stollery.]

power and second a financial power; usually things are the other way around. But today our percentage of world trade is greater than that of Italy, and in the OECD we are considered in the same group as Britain, Germany and France, the middle industrial powers. Our percentage of world trade in manufactured goods has increased tremendously over the past few years. We are no longer considered to be hewers of wood, and we have not been for some time.

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) should be complimented on his incentives to business which have boosted manufacturing investment to record levels and already have produced many new jobs.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stollery: Critics say that we should stop exporting our raw materials and process these materials here in Canada. That is what our policies are aimed at. In fact, in the general area of manufacturing we may be on the threshold of the biggest technological breakthrough in our history if the government of the United Kingdom continues its interest in 18 Canada deuterium-uranium reactors—and it will not matter which government.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stollery: The Speech from the Throne mentions our interest in solving the problems of international economic disorder through some of the international organizations, the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, etc. This is in keeping with Canada's international approach over the past decade.

The Speech from the Throne suggests that there will be no price and wage controls. Surely, Mr. Speaker, that policy has proven so bankrupt in the two major countries which have tried it, the United States and the United Kingdom, that we should put it to death for a while.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stollery: The United States is facing the worst inflation in its modern history after three years of the Nixon formula. In the United Kingdom, inflation is running at 15 per cent and wage controls have been a disaster to the country. Britain has been socially divided and the controls have been completely ineffective.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I must remind the House and the hon. member for Spadina (Mr. Stollery) in particular that his time has expired, unless he has the consent of the House to proceed. Is it agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Stollery: It could almost be said that the wage and price control policy in the United Kingdom has caused more strife than any policy in the recent history of that country.

[Translation]

As it was stated in the Speech from the Throne, controlling prices is quite a difficult proposition, while it is all but too easy to control wages. Hence, controlling prices and wages amounts to controlling wages only, as the British experience has shown.