

In my opinion, when the federal government will have to consider customs, transportation or canals, we will have a heavy load of work and legislation to pass in Parliament. I think that a complete review of the parliamentary procedure will certainly be welcomed.

[English]

Mr. Benno Friesen (Surrey-White Rock): Mr. Speaker, I should like to begin my address by congratulating you on your appointment. I have sensed in you, Sir, an amiable spirit and a genuine desire to be impartial in the regulation of the affairs of this House.

As the newly elected member for Surrey-White Rock I cannot help but compare the issues that face the people of Surrey-White Rock with those that face the people of Canada as a whole. Surrey-White Rock is a cosmopolitan riding and, in many ways, a cross-section of all Canada. We in my riding face the difficult consequences of urban sprawl.

Immigration policies and people moving out of metropolitan Vancouver have created a housing problem in Surrey-White Rock that is not acute—it is desperate! With a 1 per cent vacancy rate in spite of astronomical housing costs, the local governments have inherited a problem which is not their creation.

It gives me small comfort to see that the Speech from the Throne states there will be government help. I remember all too well the campaign promise describing the help as \$32,000 for a minimum priced home. In Surrey-White Rock that would only pay for the lot.

There is also the concomitant transportation problem. There is a crying need for a public rapid transit system to move people, together with greater development of rail and highway facilities to move goods. There are farmers in my riding whose production is vital to the metropolitan area of Vancouver. Each year when these farmers are ready to harvest their crops they are inundated with an oversupply of goods from California. If the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) really wants to help the income level of the farmers, that is one area where he might help.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (2020)

Mr. Friesen: Surrey also contains very modern port facilities, built by the National Harbours Board. These will provide tax revenue for the area but as yet they provide no direct tax base in themselves—the only revenue is that derived from the wage-earners working on these port installations. White Rock and South Surrey each have beautiful recreational beaches, but these face the threat of oil spills and other forms of pollution. The Fraser River borders the northern part of the riding and is the source of the salmon fishing industry. All these resources have attracted many kinds of heavy and light industry to Surrey-White Rock, and we welcome them.

Finally, Surrey-White Rock is the home of many senior citizens. They have found the area a desirable place in which to live but now they are desperately trying to cling to their savings, their security and their self-respect. All these problems will find a solution if we have a govern-

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ment which sees itself as the government of all the people of Canada.

I must confess that my heart skipped a beat yesterday when I heard the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) say the government could not afford to “pay mock heed to the opposition”. As is quite evident, the people of my riding have for the past 12 years not chosen to elect a representative of the party opposite. Thus, I am not a little encouraged to believe that the government will view the needs of my riding with the same degree of sensitivity as it does those represented by government members.

The Prime Minister then went on to speak of reform, emphasizing the need for greater efficiency in government. I would say to the Prime Minister and to other members of the government that the ultimate goal of parliamentary democracy is not efficiency—we have just experienced five months of that kind of efficiency. The ultimate goal of parliamentary democracy is representation and service. This representation is based upon human relationships, and when we work with human relationships we had better be careful about how much efficiency we introduce. I might add that if the Prime Minister is really anxious to bring greater efficiency to the House he might instruct his ministers to answer opposition questions in the most concrete terms rather than by making those terribly inefficient statements such as “My department is well aware of the problem and is looking into it.”

Certainly, I am not at all worried that the government will, as the Prime Minister suggested, go fishing after it has crossed the Rubicon. It is not even interested in protecting the fishermen of the west coast or of the east coast, as a matter of fact. What worries me is that after government members have crossed the Rubicon and got to Rome they will not know what to do. It seems to me that disarray, the social, economic and political problems, which faced the people of Rome in those days find a striking parallel in our own country today. I might add there are other parallels in that metaphor which one had better leave alone.

The Prime Minister made several references to the mother of parliaments. It was that parliament, 100 years ago, which had in its ranks an outstanding Liberal member in the person of John Stuart Mill. Mill was a practising non-conformist in the best sense of the word. All his life he fought a personal battle to preserve the dignity of his individuality. All his life he saw himself perpetually in a minority situation, threatened, as he said, by the “despotism of custom”.

In the context of the pressures to conform placed on him by the majority, Mr. Mill coined a phrase which is highly relevant to this House today. He spoke of “the tyranny of the majority”—not the kind of tyranny which issues from rule by dictatorship but rather the kind of tyranny which has confused the will of the majority with an acquiescent acceptance of the rightness of majority opinion. It is for this reason that I take comfort, as I said, in the Prime Minister's assurance yesterday that the government cannot afford to take lightly the views of minorities.

When I speak of minorities I realize that we immediately relate the term either to minority political groups or to minority ethnic groups. And, Mr. Speaker, I wish to point out that I have had some experience in both, especially the