

The Address—Mr. Reilly

Mr. Speaker, the remarks of the Prime Minister yesterday afternoon had about as much force and effect as that mythical story.

Mr. Trudeau: Did you say you were not a joker?

An hon. Member: He is listening.

Mr. Reilly: I have never denied it. No, Mr. Speaker, the Canadian people did not turn away from that gaggle of incompetents over there because of any anti-French campaign. The Canadian people turned away from a government that did not trust them and so did not merit their trust in return.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Reilly: The Canadian people turned away from a government that lurched for four years from one economic crisis to the next like an entire platoon of Walter Gordons.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

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Mr. Reilly: The Canadian people turned away from a bunch of ministers whose collective philosophy was best expressed by the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) during his earlier incarnation as l'eminence grise; that philosophy was, if the people do not accept your plan, it is not the plan that is at fault, it is the public relations.

The Canadian people turned away from a government that ignored the advice of the best economists of the country, and visited upon the poor, the weak and the old a time of disaster and travail from which they have still not recovered; and today's unemployment figures bear that out.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Benjamin: Oh, you friends of the working man.

Mr. Reilly: I will get to you weak-kneed, bleeding-hearts in a moment. The Canadian people turned away in disgust from a political campaign full of flatulent slogans and totally devoid of specific policies.

An hon. Member: That's pretty weak.

Mr. Reilly: The game is up. No, Mr. Speaker, neither bilingualism nor unity was the reason for the rejection of that tatty ineptitude of Grits. What happened was that the so-called Liberals, whose pre-emption of that otherwise honourable word really ought to be investigated by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Gray) as a giant fraud on the public, these so-called Liberals made the same mistake that old and tired politicians always make. They assumed that the Canadian people could not be trusted with the inconvenient facts. They were afraid to tell the people the truth, Mr. Speaker, so they tried to lull the people with a campaign whose main point was the curious assumption that, despite the steadily mounting evidence before our very eyes that they had wickedly and wilfully mismanaged this country for four years, they still had some kind of divine franchise on

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wisdom and leadership. Never mind the sad little war on inflation which according to the Prime Minister was being waged on behalf of the poor and the old—

An hon. Member: Let's have facts.

Mr. Reilly: —and in which the same poor and old became the foot soldiers, the cannon-fodder and, eventually, the victims. Never mind the prime ministerial assurance that he did not care if unemployment went as high as 6 per cent, which it promptly did, paused briefly and then moved ever onward and upward. Pay no attention, they told us, to the fact that the government had clear advance warning from the Economic Council of Canada that if it pursued its announced course, unemployment would rise and so would inflation. Never mind the Prime Minister's declaration that inflation was licked, when actually it was poised for still another leap. They went about the country neighing and braying and telling us "the land is strong", to which one of my constituents replied, "and a good thing it is, too, or else it couldn't have withstood four years of those louts."

This afternoon, Mr. Speaker, we heard from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner). It was indeed touching to hear him so well defended by the hon. member for Verdun, but on the strength of what he told us today he does not deserve such tender treatment. What did he tell us of the government's plans to reduce unemployment, the latest figures on which make poignantly plain to those hundreds of thousands of Canadians without jobs precisely how much his government cares for them? Nothing.

What good news did he bring to this House about his government's plans for relieving the plight of old people? None. Did he have anything of even passing interest to say to the members of this House about the distressing problem of inflation? There was nothing there, either. Actually, Mr. Speaker, I asked myself, after he sat down, why he had ever got up. He came before this House with no plans, no help and no information on the problems which daily plague the lives of millions of Canadians and which cry out for attention today as they have on every day of every week for the past three years.

The only reason for his intervention that I can conceive is that perhaps conventional wisdom dictates that the resolute refusal to act is the necessary prerequisite to even higher office than the one he now adorns. But that does not help the unemployed; that does not help the old people; that does not help the millions of Canadians whose incomes steadily recede before the relentless onslaught of inflation.

It was also interesting to listen to the speech made by the hon. member for Verdun, particularly his obviously sincere defence of his unemployment insurance plan. I thought, Mr. Speaker, he seemed more defensive than necessary about the plan. I happen to think it is a good plan, a progressive plan and, certainly, to judge from the monthly accumulation of human misery caused deliberately by his colleagues in government, and from the evidence presented every month by Statistics Canada, it is a necessary plan. My only quarrel with it is that it was sold to the people on the basis of faulty figures and we are now faced with an unexpected and astronomical bill to pay.