

The Address—Mr. Clark

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

WAYS AND MEANS

DESIGNATION OF ORDER OF THE DAY TO DEBATE WAYS AND MEANS MOTIONS

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 60, I am tabling a notice of a ways and means motion to amend the Employment Tax Credit Act, and I request that you designate an order of the day for consideration thereof.

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SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

CONTINUATION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed from Monday, April 14, consideration of the motion of Mrs. Côté for an address to His Excellency the Governor General in reply to his speech at the opening of the session.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, in beginning let me repeat formally, now that your election is an accomplished fact, the congratulations of hon. members of my party and underline the respect which we hold for you. Let me express on behalf of my colleagues in the official opposition that we look forward to working closely and co-operatively with you in ensuring that this House functions effectively and democratically and serves both the national interest and the national will.

[Translation]

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the new member for Rimouski (Mrs. Côté). She made an eloquent speech yesterday and I hope she will often have the opportunity to address the House.

● (1510)

[English]

I would add as well my congratulations to the hon. member for Sudbury (Mr. Frith) who follows distinguished shoes into this House. I will say to him that I did not agree with every nuance of what he said, but he said it well. This House is a place where positions should be clearly stated and disagreements occasionally recorded.

Also I think it is appropriate for me as I begin to express the admiration which I know all of us feel for the manner in which Their Excellencies, the Governor General and Mrs. Schreyer, have conducted themselves. Since this Parliament last met, they both have been afflicted with hospitalization, and yet that has not at all deterred them from the very effective carrying out of their important responsibilities to the nation.

The Speech from the Throne indicates that Canadians expect much of this Parliament. Let me be a little more precise. Canadians expect a great deal of this government. As

I have noted elsewhere, our problem when we were a government was that we had a program but not a majority necessary to implement that program and to get it through. This government has a clear majority. It has a long association with office and it has no excuse for delay in facing its full responsibilities and in dealing directly with the problems and the potential of the country.

I must say that I regret the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) did not show more courage and more imagination in choosing a cabinet. Some of his old friends deserve to retire and some of his old prejudices have kept from cabinet members like the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River (Mr. Reid), the hon. member for London West (Mr. Buchanan) and most particularly l'honorable député de Hochelaga-Maisonneuve (Mr. Joyal) who could have been of real service at this particular point in the life of this country in bringing this government closer to the mainstream of modern thought in the province of Quebec.

Despite the cabinet's collective weakness and weariness, I want to congratulate the members of the ministry on the honour and responsibility bestowed upon them. I wish them well and I give them notice now that this party will co-operate in the passage of constructive measures and will expect the government to accept its responsibility to deal quickly and honestly with the business of Canada.

We are at a time of crisis in Canada on several fronts. The government will be serving the nation badly if it pretends that only the referendum is important, or if it lets the interests of Canada suffer because of the ideology or the inflexibility of certain ministers. When speaking of ideology, I am thinking particularly of the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Gray), and when speaking of inflexibility I am thinking of its champion, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Lalonde). We have urgent problems concerning the unity of this nation, problems that were caused in no small measure by the past refusal of the Prime Minister to respond to the changing nature of this nation. I will return to that question later in my remarks, but let me serve now notice on the government that the importance of the referendum is no excuse for delaying action on economic policy, no excuse for delaying action on energy policy and no excuse for avoiding our international obligations. Indeed, delay in dealing with those acute problems may very well aggravate the tensions which now exist in the Canadian family.

First let me deal today with economic policy. Economists are predicting that our economy may have its lowest growth rate this year since 1954. A change in circumstances and the electoral commitments of the present government will add at least \$4.5 billion to the budgetary deficit which was forecast by my colleague, the hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie), when he brought down a budget in December. The attitude of the government toward the private sector is at best ambiguous.

The Speech from the Throne makes no mention at all of the economic charter signed by this Prime Minister and ten provincial premiers in 1978, an economic charter which, among