

*The Address—Mr. Vankoughnet*

confrontation, is the only course to follow in this reform process.

On the economic front several pressing matters demand our immediate and undivided attention. Among the most important is the energy issue. The dependence on imported oil and the price it is costing Canadians and their government is a dangerous policy. Only a realistic Canadian price will be able to encourage conservation and allow the financing of alternate sources.

Steps must be taken immediately to get Canada on the road to energy self-sufficiency. The inevitable consequence of such a policy is an increase in oil prices. We cannot continue living in this fool's paradise that sees Canadian consumers subsidized and sheltered from the hard facts of rapidly rising OPEC prices, and production costs at home. The present government acknowledged that in the Speech from the Throne. Such a promise dictates that prices will go up.

An effective means of conserving energy is to develop rapid transit systems for urban communities. As the price of gasoline climbs, it will be more attractive for commuters to switch to mass transit.

The Urban Transportation Development Corporation is located in my riding. This corporation was established by the Ontario government to promote mass transit. Here is a case that warrants government action and support. It would be a crime to see such a corporation die, only to have the government turn to a foreign market three or four years later to buy the same product that could be produced here, sold here, and even exported.

We have to get serious about this country's energy future, and the sooner the better. We are in a unique position among the countries of the world to make Canada self-sufficient. Let us get on with the job.

The generally poor performance of our economy is cause for great concern among Canadians. Our unemployment record is totally unacceptable. Our employment record can be improved. In a country with human and natural resources such as we have, Canada should not have such serious problems. Yet we have, and they have persisted for a number of years.

Although there are no easy answers to our economic problems, there do exist partial remedies that many observers feel would contribute to the solution of our economic woes. One of the easiest and most readily accessible steps that the government could take to demonstrate the need to solve our economic problems is staring it right in the face. It is simply called cutting government spending, through good management. Most economists and financial analysts agree that government spending has been a major contributor to Canada's current economic status.

I find it difficult to believe the Minister of Finance when he says the government will restrain its spending. The House has heard that statement too many times to give it serious consideration. This practice of unlimited government spending simply cannot continue. The government debt has to be reduced. Federal spending has to be curtailed. Growth in the

civil service has to be realistic. These measures will greatly improve the financial position of the federal government which, in turn, will help facilitate an upturn in the economy. One of the first economic indicators to reflect a healthier economy is the interest rate, which is currently too high.

The time for decisive action is upon us. The federal government must demonstrate that it is ready to sit down with the provincial premiers and discuss a renewed federalism. But the discussion will have to take place within the context of accommodation and conciliation, not confrontation. Needless to say, this approach has to be mutual.

It is clear our federal system as it now exists is not capable of accommodating the legitimate aspirations of our country's regions. Admitting that, and attempting to overcome it, does not mean that our federal system has not worked. It means that, as originally constituted, it no longer meets the needs of a country 113 years older and wiser. Change is a healthy prerequisite of any relationship, whether between individuals or people and their government. It must be clear from the start, however, that this change should still be made within a strong federal context. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and the premiers can and should be hard bargainers when they sit down to discuss constitutional change. But they must sit down and discuss present day Canada, and they must do so without dilatory tactics.

● (1750)

One aspect of our present federal arrangement which I feel it is imperative we maintain is the constitutional monarchy. Any attempt to alter or downplay this tradition which has made our country the best place in the world in which to live, will only worsen the division which some believe exists. It is unfortunate that we in this promised land, of which there is no equal, tend to deflect our attention from problems as they present themselves and concern ourselves with the way people look at the problems. The monarchy is too deeply rooted in our culture and history to be removed from our political experience. It is not the cultural aspect which is of concern to me but the threat by cunning people to upset political order and remake it according to their desire. Our forefathers have built the potential for a great nation—the greatest on earth. Why is it difficult for Canadians to appreciate how fortunate we are and what great opportunities exist for us to make this a great nation in the midst of a troubled world?

Madam Speaker, these are just some of the many pressing issues facing Canadians and their government. It is ironic that as we head into a new decade the challenges of the future are compounded by the failures of the past. Equally ironic, but no less deserved, is the fact that the administration which created so many of these problems should be the administration which is being asked to resolve them.

Now, when we are facing our most serious challenge since confederation, is the time to put those resources to work for us. We must reach within ourselves and rekindle the spirit that brought our country together over one hundred years ago. We must draw together as Canadians in an effort to save Canada