

The Address—Mr. MacKay

put when they have tried to collect the benefits which they believed would be paid to them as a matter of course.

Again, in the standing committee I tried to learn a little more about the particulars of this type of insurance, but I did not make much progress in my questioning of Mr. Pratte on this subject; and I do not blame him because I realize he was not prepared to give me this type of information. However, I asked him the following question specifically:

From the point of view of the travelling public and for their information, is it fair to say that the amount of insurance, whatever it is, is not necessarily theirs, or their estate's, as a matter of right, and each individual case must be looked at? In other words, if a person's status is such that he has no dependants, or that he is no great loss in the eyes of the law because he has no young children, or no widow, or he is an old man, a young person, or what have you, it does not necessarily follow that they get that courage. And they have to prove it in each case.

I have the view that the airlines have introduced a class or type of coverage which places the onus of proof on the bereaved family. The legal expenses and other complications involved in this procedure involving burden of proof make the insurance coverage of far less benefit than is generally believed by those covered by these policies. Mr. Pratte said to me at the time:

I am sorry. I should know the answer but I do not. I will provide you with the information.

Again, I do not wish to be unfair to Mr. Pratte, for whom I have great regard, but I have not yet received that information. When I asked him a little later about the insurance payment which Air Canada was due to receive after an incident in Toronto in which one of the planes was burnt because of a fuel spillage, Mr. Pratte informed me that the corporation had already been paid. He mentioned that payment had been made within 48 hours, or something like that, and another Air Canada witness, Mr. Cochrane I think it was, said, "Yes, 24 hours."

I commend Air Canada for having taken out coverage of that type for their aircraft, but I should like the Minister of Transport to find out whether he can obtain similar protection for the people who use Air Canada aircraft and for those who use aircraft generally in this country. I do not wish to leave the impression that I am questioning everything the Minister of Transport proposes to bring before us. That is not the case. I do not know the Minister of Transport especially well, but I have great respect for his ability and I think he definitely has the capacity to do great things for Canadian transportation. However, this remains to be proved, just as the Speech from the Throne remains to be proved. It reads well. It is full of platitudes and good wishes, and it is difficult to criticize good wishes.

Those less kind than I might describe the Speech from the Throne as a manifestation of one of the greatest political con jobs in this country, but I do not think that type of comment is necessary at this time. As the session progresses, though, if we are not presented with a solid legislative program and a definite commitment on the part of the government to implement some of its policies, no one will be able to criticize members on this side for making that type of comment. By the same token, without wishing to exaggerate the importance of the matter, and in the interest of harmony in this place, I should like to say a few words about a remark made yesterday by the hon.

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member for Vaudreuil (Mr. Herbert) concerning my right hon. friend from Prince Albert.

I do not have *Hansard* before me, and I do not wish to misquote the hon. member, but it seems to me he said yesterday that my right hon. friend, our former prime minister, did not say very much in the course of his speech. That may, of course, be his opinion, but it is not shared by many. What bothered me was the fact that he went on to say something like this, "When he leaves this place we shall probably save about four days every session." I hope the hon. member for Vaudreuil will not be insulted if I say that when members like he and I leave this place, it is probable that not many people will take account of our going, or perhaps notice, but when the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) leaves this place it will be an occasion for mourning and great sadness across the nation.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacKay: I shall be very surprised if in the next generation Canada is fortunate enough to have a parliamentarian of his ability, his spirit and his devotion to Canada. I urge the hon. member for Vaudreuil to clarify his remarks, because I thought they were unkind, uncouth and uncalled for.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Cheap.

Mr. MacKay: While we are talking about possible reforms in this place in the context of the Speech from the Throne I would urge the government, the Commissioners of Internal Economy and all those who have anything to do with providing facilities for members of parliament and for others, to take a look at the type of benefits and facilities which are made available to former prime ministers. Former prime ministers are a rare breed and they have usually devoted the whole of their lives to the service of their country. It seems to me, therefore, it is time we determined whether they have received sufficient recognition when eventually they cease their work in parliament.

The hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander) just mentioned the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). I would remind hon. members opposite that some day they may be in a similar position to the one in which I find myself today, making a request for some increased respect and recognition in the case of a man who presumably—

Mr. MacFarlane: You must expect him to live as long as Diefenbaker.

Mr. MacKay: Well, I would not want to go on record as saying he should live any shorter life than the right hon. gentleman from Prince Albert. It seems to me that if the government were really sincere about making parliament a better place in which to serve Canada, they should not be too quick to bring forward ill-conceived reforms. Those which have been brought in since the present Prime Minister took office have not, I think, worked out as well as some had hoped. There was an editorial in the *Globe and Mail* today suggesting that perhaps the government should start at home, as it were, by instructing ministers of the Crown to be a little more honest and forthright in their