

The Address—Mr. Picard

the official opposition should find nothing better, at a moment of great importance in the history of this country and of the world at large, to choose as the ground for his first attack on the government after his arrival in this chamber, than a question decidedly more intended to draw votes than pertinent to the importance of the hour. It is fortunate, however, that it gave the Prime Minister an opportunity of administering an appropriate rebuke to the propaganda methods of the Tory party which have not failed in the past to distort facts and displace issues just as they have done on the question of dominion-provincial relations.

At six o'clock the house took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The house resumed at seven-thirty o'clock.

Mr. Picard: Mr. Speaker, at six o'clock I was about to say that, in his first contribution to federal parliamentary life, the Conservative leader did not give his attention to problems related to the security and economic stability of our country. By the scope of his approach to the problems facing Canada at this moment or lurking as the problems of the future, a man's contribution to parliamentary institutions should be judged. On this score, after hearing the leader of the opposition (Mr. Drew), I have not gained the impression, nor do I think the country has gained the impression, that he is the mental giant his propagandists have pictured him.

I might say that, on the same basis of judgment, the leaders of the two other opposition parties, although I do not share all the views they expressed, have shown themselves far superior in their approach to the vital problems of the hour and in their concern for the questions which at the moment should be foremost in our mind. They appeared to understand that above petty political tactics they had to consider the fate of our country as affected by the turmoil of world politics and the precarious position we might find ourselves in within a not too distant future if we cannot bring about a correction to the insecure economic position we are gradually heading for owing to the complete collapse of the present means of exchange among nations and to the chaos prevailing in world economy.

By his speech in this house, the leader of the opposition has shown the country he is not so interested in the vital issues that should be the subject of our attention as he is in stirring up issues which he hopes will help him to be regarded by some sections of the country as the defender of their rights, rather than as the man who uttered so many statements he would today prefer to forget.

The leader of the opposition evidently did not grasp the objections raised by some members about the choice of his line of attack, when he took great pains to explain on Monday, February 21, that he had the right to raise points which were not mentioned in the speech from the throne. He referred to the question of dominion-provincial relations. No one questioned his right to do so, but we did question the propriety of doing it when there were so many questions to be considered of vital importance to the country.

His second line of attack derived from the first, and contained references to threats to the autonomy of the provinces—another war-horse he shares with his friend Duplessis. I must point out to the few Conservative members who are in the house that, in speaking thus, I am not taking anyone by surprise. I commenced my speech before six o'clock when the leader of the opposition was in his seat and he knew I would be continuing in this vein after the recess.

Mr. Robinson (Bruce): Would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Picard: I usually do not permit questions from the Conservative side because they turn out to be long-winded speeches, but if the hon. member has a short question to ask I will accept it.

Mr. Robinson (Bruce): Would the gentleman be kind enough to tell us from what he is reading?

Mr. Picard: I am reading from notes I have prepared for this speech, and in doing so I am not doing more than has been done by the members on the other side of the house. I dare the member to read as well as I am doing.

The leader of the opposition (Mr. Drew) reverses himself without changing from his previous stand, hoping that people will believe in the conversion proclaimed by him. I would ask the member who interrupted me to inform me the next time he makes a speech so that I can make sure he really does make a speech and does not read from something prepared by his leader. No one in public life has been caught in so many contradictions as has the leader of the opposition since the opening of this session. What faith can the people of Canada have in a man, no matter how clever he may be depicted by his propagandists, who in such a short period of his life has put himself on record with so many conflicting and contradictory professions of faith on national issues.

I need not go into details. The house and the country still have fresh in their mind all the questions on which the leader of the opposition has been shown his inconsistency: