

*The Address—Mr. Assad*

to my attention. It is certainly my intention to do the best to make sure that, where needed—and it is not in every part of this country that surplus government land is needed for housing—we will do our very best to ensure that it is made available for badly needed housing.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mark Assad (Gatineau—La Lièvre):** Mr. Speaker, first of all, of course, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the voters of Gatineau—La Lièvre for the confidence and the honour that they have given me to represent them here in the House of commons. They and I would like to wish the Chair health and above all success as a fair and effective arbiter at all times, in spite of difficulties.

[*English*]

The constituency that I have the honour to represent witnessed, like all other areas of this great and unique land, the rise of a nation diverse in culture and language and dedicated to the concept that this is a country of opportunity and democracy, and equitable to all citizens.

One we obviously take for granted, while the others are at least debatable. A Speech from the Throne should always reflect these primary elements in our society. To what degree they are adhered to is a matter of ideology, or a point of view, if one prefers, but nevertheless a difference of approach.

Throughout our history many a debate has centered around these basic but treasured elements that constitute a truly democratic people. Our growth, notwithstanding a relatively small population and a vast land stretching from sea to sea, has been the more remarkable.

Prior to the First World War we were basically an agricultural society. After the First World War we became basically an industrial society. Since the Second World War we are in the age of information and high technology. We have become the creators, manipulators, and distributors of information with constant innovation necessary whereby scientific research and development are essential or we risk becoming a third-rate nation.

Has the Government lived up to expectations? I doubt it.

[*Translation*]

In the last four years, the Government, just before the 1988 election, felt it needed the assistance of the

business community, big corporations that used exorbitant amounts of money in the media to help it get the re-elected.

One may wonder why in 1984 free trade was not an issue at all. I could quote the man who is now Minister of Finance and even the Minister of External Affairs. But in barely two years, this Government came up with an option that the people had not consented to in 1984.

On the eve of the 1988 election, it was observed that the big interests in this country needed the present Government to help them protect their privileges and the interests that depended on them.

Unfortunately, the middle class has to pick up the pieces—I refer to the disadvantages that will arise from this agreement for years to come.

[*English*]

I would like to bring to our attention the fact that we have never had an equitable tax system, and it has become worse over the years. It is probably the most fundamental characteristic of a democracy. Yet the present Government promised to bring in reform. After raising taxes in 1984 we began to hear about reform. I believe that this will require an incredible amount of political will when one realizes that the financial elite of this country have access to the levers of political power more than the middle class.

• (1250)

Does the present Government have the freedom to come up with a true and equitable reform for our tax system? Is the middle class in this country so organized as to protect its interest, to promote and insist that an equitable reform is necessary and should take place? They are being manipulated by financial interest, the financial elite of this country. I think the attention has to be drawn to the fact that the middle class would have to realize this threat against its interest. The business community in this country has never really had to face adverse conditions, when you consider the great benefits in the billions of dollars that they have access to through the federal Government. Yet they have the nerve to point the finger to social programs. We saw their timely questioning of the social programs, naturally after the election, and very shortly thereafter. This continued lack of leadership by the Government to address the problem will lead this country to social unrest, increased poverty, and visible class divisions that are incompatible with this country.