

The Address—Mr. Diefenbaker

Ottawa by the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gregg). One gentleman of the press said, "Two or three years ago you made a statement that there could be no strike." I said, "I hope there will not be one this time." That is as far as the conversation went. I got considerable criticism from the local paper in Sherbrooke because of the report which was made.

Mr. Diefenbaker: The Prime Minister seems to be a little touchy on that point. If that represents the extent of the Prime Minister's statesmanship on a problem like this it indicates a curious lack of any plan to settle a matter as serious as this.

Mr. Pickersgill: What would the great Tory party do?

Mr. Rowe: It could not do less anyway.

Mr. Diefenbaker: The Prime Minister has given his interpretation of what he said but the Canadian people have a right to expect something more than that from a government which over the years has governed this country. Yes, there should be something more than that. One reason no doubt for that action was political expediency, and there was no other.

Let me go on from there. I said a moment ago that the present situation is not one which has occurred overnight, it has been developing for months. In 1950 we in this party advocated a revision of the conciliation methods and procedures in the interests of flexibility and the prompt settlement of industrial disputes, but not the slightest attention was paid by the government to our proposal. These matters ought to have been calmly considered under normal conditions instead of waiting now until a major work stoppage has taken place. The government, by its attitude and conduct in 1950 and subsequently in 1953, has misled both management and employees. They have been misled by the government, by the uncertainty of the course followed by the government through the years. The Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) smiles regarding a problem that affects the hearts and purses of Canadians everywhere, that affects the economy of this country.

Over and over again there has been reference to the fact that negotiations have taken place between management and representatives of labour. Will the Prime Minister state to the house this afternoon what took place at these various meetings? Will my right hon. friend, that conciliator, the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Howe), tell the house what took place at

these several meetings at which he and the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gregg) dealt with this problem?

I ask the Prime Minister to declare this afternoon what the government is going to do. What is its plan? To sit? To think? To contemplate and to issue daily statements? I ask the Prime Minister to say this afternoon what the government is going to do, what course it will follow, what leadership it will give to the House of Commons, what plans it has in mind.

Those are the questions that are being asked today across this country, for after all with the vast majority enjoyed by the government it is indeed in a position to indicate its plans and also to ask parliament to provide the means whereby those plans will be carried into effect. One week has gone by. I ask the Prime Minister this. Have you not got a plan? Is this thing to continue on and on?

An hon. Member: Have you got a plan?

Mr. Diefenbaker: When the Prime Minister has placed that plan before the house, it will be the first time there will be any indication of leadership on the part of the government in this matter that affects vitally the people of Canada and all the people of Canada.

I pass on now to the question of international affairs.

Mr. Herridge: What is your plan?

An hon. Member: What is your solution?

Mr. Diefenbaker: In 1950, having regard to the circumstances which then existed, we indicated our stand and that stand was voted down. In the light of experience since, the recommendations then made would have avoided the possibility of future tie-ups of this kind, particularly if the recommendations made from this side of the house with reference to improvement and modernization of the machinery for conciliation has been considered and implemented.

I pass on to the major question dealt with in the speech from the throne. It is interesting to note over the years the degree to which external affairs have more and more taken up the time of and received consideration by parliament. If one looks back over the years one finds in the debates of parliament that there was a time when little of the operative time of parliament was taken in the discussion of external affairs. But in the speech from the throne approximately two pages are devoted to the subject of foreign affairs, and there are one or two matters in connection therewith that I wish to bring to the attention of the house.

When one thinks of external affairs one cannot lose sight of the fact that one who