

The Address—Mr. S. Knowles

allocate funds for completing these projects because there are more than one and a half million people in that region.

The Throne Speech announces the early presentation of White Papers on communications, citizenship, immigration, national defence and income security which we will have the pleasure of examining. The government has also tabled 68 bills to be submitted to members of Parliament during the session. Several of them are of particular interest to my constituency. For example there are bills to amend the Small Businesses Loans Act and the Farm Improvement Loans Act, a bill creating the Canada Development Corporation, one relating to income security, veterans pension legislation, a bill to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act, a bill respecting government organization, a bill creating a Department of Urban Affairs and Housing, another creating a Department for the protection of the environment and, finally, a bill respecting farm products marketing agencies.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, may I be allowed to remind my colleagues that there is still much work to be done in our beautiful country and that to do so in order, peace and social justice, there is nothing better than work, perseverance, dialogue and understanding. Canada will thus be more thriving and beautiful. Canadians will be more united if all together they do their duty simply.

● (2:50 p.m.)

[English]

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, as everyone understands, this is a difficult day during which to make a speech. However, even in times of adversity life must go on, and I suggest that it behooves us not to slacken but rather to intensify our efforts to build in Canada the kind of society in which there is human dignity for all our people. We are of course quite conscious of the many strains to which life in this country is subject, and for the short while that I would like to speak this afternoon I wish to say something about one of those strains. Indeed, it is the one that I think is most serious, not only for us in Canada but for mankind throughout the world.

I refer to the strains and the stresses that are created in human society by gross inequalities and widespread poverty. Ours is an age in which we sometimes marvel at and even boast of our scientific and technological achievements. We like to quote figures to show how great are the advances we have made. Mind you, in recent times we have come to realize that progress is not everything, particularly when one of the by-products of progress is the bespoiling of our environment to the extent that it might be impossible for human life to continue. That is a problem by itself, a problem of great magnitude. I welcome the widespread public concern over that problem and I welcome the fact that the government is also concerned about it. However, alongside that great problem of saving our environment so that human life can continue, I suggest that there is this other extremely serious problem, namely, poverty and inequality.

[Mr. Comtois.]

The situation on the world scale is well known, namely, that about two-thirds of the world's people live their entire lives in hunger and poverty. We know that despite the tremendous amounts of money we have spent on external aid, despite the fact that we have raised the living standards of some of those in the developing countries, the gap is still growing and our world is still threatened with all of the difficulties that come because two-thirds of our people are hungry and the other third enjoy only at least a slightly better standard of living. But not only is that true on the world scale, I think it is terribly true for Canada.

I insist that along with the efforts we must make to meet our stresses and strains in the constitutional area, between or among our various racial and other groups, we must also concern ourselves with the fact that when masses of people are poor and have nothing to look forward to but living in poverty throughout their lives, this kind of thing tears our society apart.

● (3:00 p.m.)

I suggest indeed that no matter how perfect a constitution we might write, no matter how much accord we might achieve in federal-provincial relations, and in relations between the executive and the members of the House of Commons, unless we do something about this problem of poverty and inequality our society will not be able to stand the strain.

There are two things which I think are not the answer to the problem of poverty. The first thing which I am convinced is not the answer is something on which we have relied for a long time. It is not the answer to do things for the poor, yet to leave them in a state of poverty. I am convinced that many of our welfare programs, and many of the other things we have done, do only that. They are things we do for the poor, but after we have done them they are still poor. As a matter of fact, statistics show that for all we have done to raise the economic standard of the lower groups in our society we have raised the standards of those at the upper end to such an extent that the gap is wider than ever.

Some might argue that the poverty that is experienced down at the lower end is therefore psychological. It is still very real, and I believe a great deal of the tension and chaos and uncertainty in social life today stems from this feeling of frustration, injustice and unfairness, arising from the fact that we have so much poverty, and I am convinced it is not the answer just to do things for the poor but to leave them in that state.

The second thing, Mr. Speaker, that I think is not the answer is for us to continue to believe that we can enjoy the hierarchical economy that we have accepted as a matter of course. Since the days of Adam Smith it seems to have been the notion that if there are more rich at the top some of that wealth will filter down and the poor will somehow manage to survive.

In fact, I think it has to be said that in many of the efforts that we make to improve the conditions of those at the lower end of the scale we keep saying to ourselves that we can do this without interfering with still higher standards for those at the top. I think we will have to get