

The Address

five years of progressive damage, of lack of growth year by year and of trees dying over the years because of acid precipitation. In Europe the problem is doubled. It is caused in part by air emissions from the burning of fossil fuels and from non-smelter activities and by car emissions. Our situation may differ in degree, but nevertheless we are gradually observing the same symptoms and beginning to measure the same damage in economic terms as the Europeans are at the present time. Therefore, we see not only an inter-relationship, a link between environmental and economic issues, but we begin to discover that actually the economy functions within the environment and the two cannot be seen as separate entities.

I will illustrate this with another example. What the people living along the Niagara River and the people living along the St. Clair River are experiencing is the result of economic activities in preceding decades which have resulted in damage being caused to those water resources, surface water in this case. For example, along the Niagara you cannot drink the water. Canadians living in Niagara-on-the-Lake have to depend on water pumped in from Welland. People living in cities and communities along the St. Clair River are also beginning to depend on water being pumped in from Lake Huron. Here we see serious damage to an economic base that depends on water as a result of industrial activities. The clear conclusion that inevitably one has to make is that if we are not very careful in our conceptual way of organizing our thinking, we are in for some deep trouble in the long term because we will fail to see that the protection of the environment is actually the same as the protection of the economy. The "E" beginning the word environment equals the "E" beginning the word economy. The two in the long term are indistinguishable, but in the short term we seem to think that they are separate. I am putting it this way to warn Members about the potential danger that we will face unless we rectify our thinking in this respect.

Coming back to the Speech from the Throne and to what I mentioned a moment ago, I regret very much that the Government of Canada has not in this document given the environment the top priority that it requires for the reasons I have just outlined, namely, linked to the fact that when we talk about the environment we are really talking about the economy of the nation. The environment has to become the top item on the agenda of any modern Government that wants to protect its economy in the medium and in the long term if not in the short term.

In more detail, when looking at the Speech from the Throne there was one item some of us here had been looking for and which you have heard about several times on different occasions. I am speaking of a measure whereby we would see a change in the taxes applied on the price of gasoline at the pump. You have heard me, Mr. Speaker, urging the Government at the time of the last Budget to ensure that the price of unleaded gasoline, which for several reasons is environmentally friendly and less damaging to human health, is made less expensive than leaded gasoline. Yet this matter is not being

tackled by the Government in this Speech from the Throne. If you go to the pump, you have all the incentives possible to misfuel because leaded gasoline is still less expensive, and becoming more so, than unleaded gasoline. While this may seem to be a measure of small impact on the environment, there is conclusive evidence to indicate that a switch to unleaded gasoline on the part of motorists, the trucking industry and any type of vehicle on our streets and highways is extremely important to reduce the impact of the NO_x gases emitted by cars when they use leaded gasoline. Burning leaded gasoline adds to the acid rain problem, which in the long term affects the acidity of the soil and affects our waters. It also has an eroding and a damaging effect on crops, buildings, structures and on the capacity of our forests to maintain the optimum pH level which has been in existence for centuries and which is presently being seriously affected.

The question of changing our fiscal systems in order to modify the price of gasoline at the pump and give unleaded gasoline the lower price to make it more attractive to the customer is a matter of great urgency with which this Government has to deal. It is very regrettable and most unfortunate that in this document the Government has not indicated any vision or sense of direction as to what it wants to do. May I call it 4.30 p.m., Mr. Speaker?

• (1630)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): It being 4.30 p.m. it is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 62(4), to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the amendment. The question is on the amendment. Mr. Cassidy (Ottawa Centre), seconded by Mr. Riis (Kamloops—Shuswap), moved:

That the following be added to the Address:

"This House regrets that the Government has failed to provide leadership on major issues of social justice affecting average Canadians including the need for action to provide greater protection for battered women, a commitment to legislate pro-rated benefits for part-time workers, the majority of whom are women, a refusal to establish and work towards lower unemployment targets for Canadians, and the failure to pursue a serious tax reform that would eliminate the unfairness, the complexity and the unaccountability of the present system".

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): All those in favour will please say yea.

Some Hon. Members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some Hon. Members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): In my opinion, the nays have it.