

*The Address—Mr. Flis*

impressive statement to make inasmuch as no democratically minded person would argue that the elected legislature should be anything else but the focus of initiative and review in government policy. Is the new government acting in accord with this lofty ideal? I think not. The reason given for the longest delay in Canadian history between election day and the summoning of Parliament was for the ministers to become expert in their respective portfolios. Judging from the responses that we have been hearing to opposition questions in the last few days, one is left to wonder why it was assumed that five months would be sufficient.

By the appointment of a freshly defeated and unproven, novice politician to a senior economic portfolio, the Prime Minister has made a blatant end run around Parliament and the democratic process as we know it.

Had Parliament the opportunity to debate it in advance, perhaps the government could have been dissuaded from its unfortunate policy on the Israeli embassy question. Under the guidance of prime minister Trudeau, Canada acquired a reputation of considerable stature in foreign affairs. This reputation has been seriously eroded in an ominously brief period of time, and all before a single member of Parliament was afforded the opportunity to ask who, what, where, when or why.

The revelation of budgetary substance by way of a press conference is an unacceptable affront to Parliament. The House of Commons is very jealous of its primacy in the knowledge of such matters. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Crosbie), who is as quick with his wit as he is slow with his answers, continues to mock the intelligence of all members with his evasiveness. Perhaps he was named to that portfolio because of his dexterity at passing the buck. Only last week we witnessed confusion by the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Stevens) over responsibility for the estimates after presenting them on behalf of His Excellency the Governor General. The lack of organization apparent within this government is alarming.

The formation of the several parliamentary committees is a positive step. Parliament should have accurate data when reviewing the estimates, and it should have a major voice in the determination of such major policy areas as foreign investment, nuclear energy, cultural policy and the several other important matters cited for examination. To broaden the activities of Parliament, however, is not necessarily synonymous with broadening its powers. I truly hope that in this session we begin to witness a convergence of the two.

The importance of instilling confidence in the Canadian economy was stressed in the Speech from the Throne. The behaviour of the Toronto Stock Exchange last week suggests that this objective is not within reach at the moment. If the government wishes to restore confidence in the economy, it must withdraw such misdirected and hackneyed schemes as the mortgage interest and tax credit plan. Though conceived with an honourable motive, the plan is inadequate, as many Canadians such as renters and full home-owners cannot participate. Given the impact on increases in the interest rate

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permitted by the present government, all benefits of the plan have become extinct. Unfortunately, the costs of the plan will outlast the benefits by several years.

In other matters pertaining to the economy, it is heartening to see the effects of the last budget continuing to moderate the inflation rate and unemployment. I believe that governments should channel a great deal more resources toward youth and their interests than has been the case in the past in Canada.

In 1976, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development—we see it in the media as OECD—completed a study on educational policies in Canada. Our system was harshly criticized for lacking unity of purpose or any orientation toward the future in the face of overwhelming arguments in favour of some kind of central direction. The report made the following points in favour of a national authority to involve itself in education:

Education is a right of each citizen, due to each system irrespective of his place of residence . . . The standards maintained by schools, community colleges and universities are of national interest, because a large part of scientific-technical achievement, and hence, economic and social well-being may depend on them . . . unity of the educational system is a national interest, in order to maintain and guard the freedom of choice (via mobility) of citizens . . . the educational philosophy of an educational system and the principles underlying its operation are matters of national interest, because cultural and national consciousness depend on it.

No political party in Canada has had the guts to infringe upon the provincial jurisdictions in education, but I believe the time has come to amend the constitution to allow for a federal ministry of education which would set national goals and national standards.

I applaud the initiatives of the government in assisting young Canadians in the work force. My own background is heavily oriented in education—equipping young people to cope with situations that they will encounter outside school. In this Thirty-first Parliament there are at least five dozen others who have been involved with education either through teaching or through school administration. As an educator I have witnessed first hand the value of, indeed the need for, a positive esprit de corps, be it a school spirit or a national will. Just as a winning team enhances the spirit of a school, a strong national pride enhances a country.

The Liberal government provided strong leadership based on winning ideas such as Petro-Canada and the plan of national health care. Both of these ideas are being undermined by the current excess of Tory governments in Canada. By shedding all of its powers to the provincial governments, this federal government is neglecting its responsibility to act on behalf of the national fact known as Canada.

My parents emigrated from Poland at the height of the depression. The fact that they settled in Saskatchewan as opposed to Manitoba or New Brunswick was only incidental to them—they considered their destination to be Canada. As a citizen of Canada by birth, I cannot help but be alarmed when I see the federal government jettisoning its responsibilities, left, right, and centre, to the provincial governments. These several provincial governments are answerable to and must act on behalf of the residents of their respective provinces. None of