

The Address

indeed something positive for our future and for the development of our trade relations.

• (2005)

Unfortunately, the difficulties of transition had been overlooked. It did not cross the government's mind that companies needed help to face this new context. The monetary policy and the lack of preparation for a new international trade context combined to make the situation even more painful for Canadians than it was in 1984.

It is now incumbent upon this Parliament to settle once and for all a number of problems that get worse and worse all the time.

Why are we here? First, we heard the throne speech, the contents of which we are now discussing. The first topic is a Parliamentary reform that could eventually lead to more responsibilities for members. This is certainly commendable. That approach could prove interesting. We should wait and see what this reform is all about.

On the other hand, at the same time, you want to enhance the role of members of this House, yet you refuse to create an all-party nonpartisan parliamentary committee to analyze, examine, study, and criticize each spending item of the government. Instead, you merely mention a few examples of benefits which could be discarded so that we can appease our consciences and try to convince Canadians that we have done what had to be done.

So, a parliamentary reform that is already somewhat handicapped, I would say, by the fact that the first valid exercise to which we could have invited the members of this House is being dismissed by this government, a Speech from the Throne in which this government did not see fit to reassure the citizens of this country about the kind of changes that it was ready to make in the social programs.

It is disturbing to note that, at times, signals are given by politicians whose decisions are important in these matters and, at other times, in statements by employers, by people involved in the economic development, by people who are looking for solutions to the budget problems of the government, but who can only identify social programs as the primary target.

Imagine the wonderful country and the brave government that will solve the debt problem of this country on the backs of those who suffer the most! Are they going to hit the elderly, or the unemployed once again? Are they going to hit people on welfare or health programs? We do not know.

At times, the messages are informal, at other times, they are more formal in articles that they hasten to deny the next day. At any rate, when I hear the minister of Canadian Intergovernmental Affairs, right at the beginning of this mandate, say to us that they should at least try and cut 20 per cent in health care programs, I am concerned. It is nothing at all! Twenty per cent! As if it were the problem to tackle first.

• (2010)

We are sometimes told that we should make the system more effective. Naturally, everybody wants to make this system more effective. But no one ever talked about maintaining or protecting the financial resources allocated to these programs. What worries us is that each time issues such as the debt and the current year deficit of over \$40 billion are raised, each time that these issues are raised, the social programs are inevitably associated with the repayment of the debt, with the reduction of the deficit. There is always someone somewhere to suggest that the money is to be found in the social programs.

Administrative duplications in this country are very expensive. Hundreds of millions of dollars are wasted in jurisdictional disputes between the various levels of government. Today, we have asked—I personally did—the member opposite if he would make it a priority to address the issue of manpower. All Quebecers agree with that. Someone is whispering to me that he said he would. Of course, he said he would. He always says yes, but sometimes it is “yes, right away”, and some other times it is “yes, probably”. It could be “yes, certainly”, “yes, probably”, or “yes, sometime in the future”.

The problem is that it is stop and go in an area where the Minister could make history. All he would have to do is endorse the consensus among the people involved in Quebec. Seldom have we seen the unions, the industry, the federalist liberal government of Quebec, the people responsible for manpower training, the unemployed, the hundreds of thousands of unemployed in Quebec, all in agreement. But they are, and what they are asking the federal government, before it cuts into social programs, is to save the \$250 million wasted on duplicate services which only create problems.

I thought that the government would leap at a tremendous opportunity like this one. But the Minister for Intergovernmental affairs is not sure. Maybe yes, maybe no. It makes no sense. The government will have to face reality some day. You are indicating that my time is up, Mr. Speaker, so I will conclude. The government must face reality, it must listen to members of this assembly, it must seize the opportunities available to save money without taking away from those most in need.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague from the other side and I take this opportunity to congratulate him on being elected