

The Address

complete switch in seats and I like this a lot too. I hope he appreciates the seat which I kept warm for him for several years as well.

On to the throne speech. Let us look at some of the things that went right in the throne speech and some of the things that have gone wrong. Maybe there are some weaknesses in it. Far be it for me to stand here and be terribly critical.

We are all here, I believe, for one reason regardless of our political affiliation or the way we are trying to come at this. I think we all believe that we want this country to be a better place no matter what we think of it. We are here for that reason only because it is not fun commuting to Ottawa.

From this throne speech we realize that probably the main concern of all Canadians is that of economic insecurity. Certainly that is the real focus of this throne speech. People in this country realize that they are frustrated with high taxes. They fear for social programs or the lack of a real job.

The economic insecurity troubling Canadians certainly results from many factors both national and international. Granted, there is perhaps little we can do at the international level but there are many ways by which we can determine to move this country ahead economically within Canada's borders. The way we exercise that potential influence through our taxing and spending policies is all important.

Unfortunately for Canadians, for the past 20 years we have perhaps had too much government. Governments, both Liberal and Conservative, have spent too much, taxed too much and owed too much.

Let us not bicker. Considering the hon. members on the other side of the House with whom I sat, I remember well the back and forth volleys. The Conservatives said the Liberals left them the debt.

I do not want to see that happen again. Some of my friends over here will talk about those Conservatives. People do not care. What people are concerned about is that we dig ourselves out of this debt hole and they do not want to concern themselves with the fact of whomever it was who got us into it. We want to get out of this debt hole and we will do our best on this side of the House to make sure that we put policies into practice and support this government when it brings in legislation so that we can start digging ourselves out and not worry about who dug us in. Let us dig ourselves out. That is the focus we need to take.

We must break the cycle of spending more, borrowing more and taxing more. What a refreshing change if we would be able to stand here as parliamentarians and say that we believe in spending less and borrowing less so that down the road we will be guaranteed that we will be taxed less. I think the Canadian public would support that wholeheartedly.

We are aware that the annual deficit now exceeds 5 per cent of the GDP. This government has promised to lower it to 3 per cent during the life of this Parliament.

● (1900)

That is noble and we will applaud that, but let us make sure that it is only the first step because 3 per cent of the GDP is still well up, \$20 billion or \$25 billion of an annual deficit. We will be digging ourselves continuously into that debt hole if we just function at that level.

Let us say for step one for this government it is 3 per cent of GDP but let it only be step one or phase one. Let us move rapidly toward a balanced budget so that we can break even with our arrears payments and then start making the actual payments on the mortgage.

We have spoken long and loud about this debt quagmire and we want to make sure that the Canadian public sees something in us in this 35th Parliament that we would be able to make some suggestions.

I am so glad to know that we have some economic specialists in my caucus now. I will leave that to them. It is marvellous because I have been able to turn that job over to them. I will let them deal with specifics about numbers and philosophies in terms of economics but let me say that we need to reform the economics of this country. The Minister of Finance is well aware of it and many of the Liberal backbenchers that I know and have spoken with are concerned about it as well.

Second, in terms of economics, what must we do with the pension plan for members of Parliament? I stand before you and before this House as the only member of my entire caucus who qualifies for a member of Parliament pension at this point. I speak wholeheartedly about this as well as with serious conviction that we just do not talk about it and try to make it look good on the outside. We should see substantive reforms in the MP pension plan that are really going to make a difference and not just say that we have made changes in it. Let us make sure that it is brought more in line with the private sector and that it is not such a completely enriched situation where no other Canadian citizen would qualify for such a ridiculously extravagant pension.

This process was introduced in 1952, the year I was born. It has been increasingly enriched far too much and almost in fact corrupted. Could we use that word? People in this situation will get into a program which is not actuarially sound. It is three or four times what every other pension plan is.

Let us work together on that. People do not want their members of Parliament to be poorly paid. We learned that in the campaign. People do not want their members of Parliament to sort of be put out to pasture and not looked after, but let us make sure that it is brought into line actuarially so that we are not doing anything any more extravagant than that for other Canadian citizens. I do believe that the Canadian public would go for that.