

The Address—Mr. Hellyer

debate on the Speech from the Throne before the fundamental constitutional vote of confidence in the government was taken. I am glad to see that the other parties in the House are not buying this nonsense. It is interesting that the government won that vote 154 to 104, which is a larger majority than many of the votes in the last parliament. I do not believe the people of this country want this kind of politicking. I do not believe the people of this country want another election. I have talked in my constituency to voters from all political parties and they say: get on with the job of governing; bring in legislation to build a better economy and to build a better society, a better Canada.

• (1210)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Foster: This should be our goal this session, utilizing the outline of legislation contained in the Speech from the Throne to ensure that the real winners as a result of our efforts are the Canadian people.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Paul Hellyer (Trinity): First of all, Mr. Speaker, I should like to say how pleased I am that you have been unanimously chosen to preside over us once again. As your seatmate during part of the last parliament, I came to know your human qualities of understanding and compassion as well as your more public characteristics of a sense of justice and unfailing good humour. In the performance of your duties I know you will be supported and encouraged by your lovely and gracious wife.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hellyer: I should like to extend my congratulations also to the hon. member for Halifax-East Hants (Mr. McCleave) who will act as your deputy. Few members of this House are as universally regarded with both respect and affection as he.

[Translation]

I also wish to congratulate the hon. members for Nipissing and Lachine (Messrs. Blais and Blaker) on their being elected to the House of Commons, and on having had the honour of being chosen mover and seconder of the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne which task they fulfilled with eloquence. They are fortunate in being able to speak with such ease both official languages of our country. I wish them much success in their parliamentary career.

[English]

Although the quality of this debate has been unusually high, Mr. Speaker, I must say I was disappointed in the speeches made by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand). Fairly interpreted, their speeches have indicated that they have learned nothing from the election results. The people have spoken but the message has not been received by the government. The big three, now augmented by the incarnation of the hon. Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) to the big four, have not got the message. They did not listen to their colleagues in cabinet; they

[Mr. Foster.]

largely ignored the warnings of caucus; they totally ignored the most important policy decisions of the Liberal party and now they demonstrate by their attitude and by their intemperate language that the people, too, count for nothing.

Bilingualism was not a big issue in the election. It was important in the Ottawa area because the pledges given by Prime Minister Pearson and then by the present Prime Minister were not honoured. This created an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust which was bound to be reflected in the vote. But in so far as the rest of the country is concerned, the issues were far more complex and represented, for the most part, a rejection of governmental incompetence and bungling in economic matters. This government failed to solve the ordinary issues of jobs and prices and housing as they affected many citizens, and the vote said so. It was an amalgam of unemployment, inflation, the abuse of unemployment insurance, the failure to take realistic steps to increase Canadian participation in the ownership and development of our own industries and resources, questionable LIP and OFY grants, failure to alleviate regional disparity, and a generally makeshift and amateurish approach to the solution of economic problems that destroyed the credibility of the government and its leaders.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hellyer: The unemployment rate in Canada is too high. It is the worst of any industrialized country in the western world. This is a shameful situation, and, and as one United States economist said in Toronto a few weeks ago, it is totally unacceptable—he could not understand how it could be tolerated. His view was typical of the view held by others. A couple of years ago when I travelled around the world talking to some of the best economists, labour leaders and bankers, I was asked from time to time what the unemployment rate was in Canada. My answer was received by them with disbelief. In several instances, the person to whom I was talking asked: how could any democratic government survive with an unemployment rate as high as that?

We do not need United States economists or others to tell us about unemployment. We know it is a totally unsatisfactory situation. We know it is totally unacceptable to many Canadians and that something must be done about it. On Sunday I interviewed a number of constituents who were passionately—and in some cases desperately—seeking work at a living wage. The fact that they cannot find employment at a living wage underlines the contention that our unemployment rate is the number one indicator of gross incompetence. It is also the number one indicator of moral failure. When we have such a high unemployment rate, is it not a strange anomaly that there are, at the same time in Canada, tens of thousands of unfilled jobs? Many reasons are cited for this paradox. Some suggest it is because the unemployed do not have the proper qualifications for the jobs being offered. Close scrutiny indicates this is not normally the case. It is also suggested that many unemployed persons do not really want to find work. While this may be true of a small minority, a more credible and accurate explanation lies in the fact that in many cases the wages being offered are not sufficient to live on, and that in tens of thousands of