

In closing, may I speak for a moment for comparative purposes about my own riding of Peel South, which is composed of Mississauga, its port town of Port Credit, and Streetsville, the most dynamic and fastest growing area in the world. It demonstrates what can happen in a free and healthy democracy. Last year an immense amount of new industry settled there. By the second election to come we will have a population, I believe, of perhaps 400,000 people and will require four members to serve us. Quebec desires and deserves this same growth, and all of us look forward to similar economic growth there. But can it happen if we allow this lawlessness to continue? Surely for Quebec and for Canada the most important issue facing us is the need to strengthen immediately our criminal laws.

● (3:50 p.m.)

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): First of all, Mr. Speaker, as is customary I should like to join with other hon. members who have preceded me in this debate in extending my congratulations to the mover and seconder of the address in reply, the hon. member for Bourassa (Mr. Trudel) and the hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Douglas).

I too, subscribe to many of the thoughts expressed by the hon. member who has just taken his seat. I find myself at this moment pre-empting some of the thoughts and observations that I had intended to make in addressing myself to the crisis facing our country at the present time. It is difficult if not impossible for any member to rise in his place during this debate without making some reference to the events that are taking place at this moment in this city of Ottawa and in the province of Quebec. The presence of armed troops on parliament hill is an awesome and frightening spectacle. It is so awesome and so frightening that we have to stop for a moment and ask ourselves over and over again, can this be happening here, can this be happening to us? What in the name of God is happening to our country?

As we contemplate these events, there is one thing that emerges very clearly, at least to me at any rate, and that is that this country will unhappily never be the same, no matter how successfully concluded are the negotiations now going on to free other unfortunate men who are the victims of this conspiracy. No longer can we, as Canadians, look at this world through rose coloured glasses. No longer can we view the violence, turbulence, and unrest of other countries with smug complacency in the knowledge that it cannot happen here. It is happening here and it is happening now.

I am one member of this House who finds himself at a loss to explain to my children just exactly what is happening. It is difficult for me to understand, hence it very difficult for me to explain it to them. Certainly, as members of this House, we at this time in this place can give voice to the thoughts of the vast majority of Canadians in this country who view, through the medium of television day by day and hour by hour, the drama and crisis that is unfolding before them. We can give voice to their

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concern on the floor of this House. We can give voice to that concern as Members of Parliament and we can express our own individual concern for the future of this country.

I believe that the majority of the people in this country feel that the Government of Canada has acted wisely in not yielding to the demands of these criminals.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McGrath: I believe that the government acted responsibly in placing paramount importance on the maintenance of the rule of law in this country. That is certainly the government's responsibility and they would stand condemned by the people of Canada if they did otherwise. We must ask ourselves whether the government, in their attempts and in their human desire to save the lives of these men, have gone a little bit too far? Have we perhaps in the process lost something?

There should be no question of absolution and there should be no question of a deal. A terrible and heinous crime has been committed. The only course to be followed now is that of the due process of law, otherwise where will this end? Who will be safe in this country? Certainly, there will be no security for those who have the responsibility of government or have the responsibility of representing other governments in this country.

At the same time, I cannot help but feel that we have perhaps slightly overplayed our hand with the presence of armed troops in Ottawa and on parliament hill. To my mind, this dramatically illustrated that we have overplayed our hand and have hurt the prestige of this country in the eyes of the world. Surely, the government did not have to resort to armed troops in full battle dress. Surely, this could only have the effect of aggravating an already aroused public and of hurting our reputation which has already been badly tarnished in the eyes of the world. I say that with all earnestness and at the risk of being classed as one of the Prime Minister's bleeding hearts. I say that because I believe that even though this is a time of great crisis some other provision could have been made. Some other forces could have been called upon without having to resort to calling in troops in full battle dress.

Perhaps the government would be better advised, while at the same time maintaining the security of our public officials, to look at the cause of the great problems that face this country. I cannot help but note that we are not going to solve the great economic problems of this country, the problems of regional development and disparity, as well as the attendant problems of unemployment, by the type of band-aid treatment announced in the House last evening by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson). He laughs at the winter works program, yet he has had to draw in his horns and bring in a program which can only be classified as band-aid treatment. They will not get at the heart of the matter and will not in my view help to reduce the growing rate of unemployment, especially in the province of Quebec, the Atlantic prov-