

*The Address—Mr. Epp*

I am placing drug abuse on the agenda of two federal-provincial conferences to be held later this fall with Health Ministers and Social Services Ministers in order to explore with them areas in which our Governments can work together through our schools, parent-teacher associations, neighbourhood and community groups, provincial addictions agencies and business organizations, just to mention a few.

The Government will introduce changes to legislation dealing with illicit drugs, notably to the Food and Drugs Act and the Narcotic Control Act, to consolidate and modernize the legislation underpinning enforcement efforts. Some of these changes will enable us to respond more swiftly to rapid changes in the drug market. This will give us a basis for dealing more effectively, for example, with the problem of so-called designer drugs including angel dust and MEM.

Third, there must be involvement in international efforts to combat drug abuse, just as the Minister of Fitness and Amateur Sport did in Dublin last week, and we commend him for his efforts. It is clear that the drug problem is an international one. I will be asking my fellow health Ministers in the Commonwealth to address the issue of drug abuse at our meeting in Nassau next week. Canada will increase its funding for the United Nations fund on drug abuse, and Canada intends to accede to the convention of psychotropic substances of 1971. This action will be welcomed in the international community, as well as our active participation in the UN 1987 world ministerial conference on drug abuse and illicit trafficking.

• (1210)

The effects of drug abuse can be devastating for families, and young people in particular, as can an inappropriate response which sets one generation against another or blames the wrong people for the problem or fails to take into account our unique national fabric.

I said that our Government's performance in the social policy field reflects our views that economic growth and social justice are mutually reinforcing, and that success must be measured in terms of progress, not perfection. However, the Government does not wish to take the credit for social progress, because we have tried to make it clear that our vision of social justice involves all partners in society. We are confident that our social agenda is on track. It is in tune with Canadian traditions and Canadian values. We intend to proceed with it, and I thank the House for its time.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Allmand:** Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Minister is recognized as an honest man. I credit him with that reputation, but because of it I ask him if he feels that the following statement in the Speech from the Throne is a truly honest one. It reads:

Two years ago, my Government received a national mandate—a mandate for reform. It was a mandate that summoned Canada to the tasks of national reconciliation, economic renewal, social justice, and to a constructive internationalism. Today, my Ministers believe these goals are within reach.

Can the Minister honestly say that the goal of social justice is within reach in this country? I give him that improvements have been made; improvements have been made under his Government and improvements have been made under our previous Governments. However, to me that statement is so far out of line that it is unbelievable. I do not see how a Government and he, as a Minister of that Government, can say that the goal of social justice is within reach. What is his reaction to that statement in the Speech from the Throne?

**Mr. Epp (Provencher):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the Hon. Member for acknowledging that progress has been made. In my speech I used the word "progress". I am one who believes very sincerely that perfection in a human state will not be achieved. However, I believe that as humans with a responsibility in the House we must move forward in the areas of social progress, some of which I mentioned today, some of which I did not mention today but support, and others that maybe the Hon. Member feels are more important than the ones I stressed.

The Prime Minister put forward four points to Canadians in the 1984 election campaign. If we look at each one of those points—what the Prime Minister put forward and what Canadians adopted and accepted by giving him a mandate to lead the country—we can honestly say that good progress has been made. We can argue about degree, but let us at least accept one thing. On the four principles put forward by the Prime Minister, Canadians today have seen legitimate progress when they compare the record of September, 1984 with the period of the Throne Speech in 1986.

**Ms. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Minister about some of the past policies, since he said that the Government would be judged by how much it has done for children. I think that is a very valid criterion to use because we all know that children are the future of society and of the country. I am somewhat concerned about the philosophy which he always espouses, that the Conservative Government is really concerned with children and families that are in greatest need. If they are really concerned about children, it seems to me that they should be concerned about all children and all families in Canada.

The particular policies which were reflected in the family benefits reforms took away the indexing of family allowances and reduced that program for all children and all families. I think it was really a reflection of how little value is put on the importance of all children and on the cost of social programs for which all taxpayers in Canada have to pay.

I think of another example. While there was some slight increase in the child tax credit, the eligibility for that credit was reduced, so that average families, and in fact very marginal families do not receive any child tax credit. Would the Minister reconsider those two policies? Does he plan to reindex the family allowance? Would he consider increasing the eligibility for child tax credit?