

The Address—Mr. de Corneille

The article continued:

What kind of fools does he take us all for? For thirty-three minutes his Throne Speech rolled out every tired, shopworn idea as if you, the people of this country, were a passel of idiots, unable to face reality . . . We must all hope that the men around Mulroney are better than Mulroney's ideas appear to be.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I would remind the Hon. Member, when he is talking about other Hon. Members, to refer to them by their titles and not by their names.

Mr. de Corneille: Mr. Speaker, that was from a quotation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That does not matter.

Mr. de Corneille: Why is the judgment that has been passed on the Throne Speech so severe? After all, it is true that we have come to expect Throne Speeches to be general in nature, and this one certainly was general. But by tradition, as well as by common sense, it is required that the Government announce in the Throne Speech an outline of the policies and legislation which the Government will bring forward in the next lengthy session of Parliament. That is why the speech is read at the opening of Parliament. It is to give us a blueprint for the future. It is so important that the Members of the Senate and the House of Commons await its words with great anticipation. The media gives it national television coverage so that people can hear what the Government is proposing for the years ahead.

Of course, it is true that the Conservatives promised heaven on earth to the electorate during the election campaign but offered few specifics. So, in one way, the Throne Speech could not pick up specific policies from the election campaign. The Tories could not give us anything from the election campaign, but the Throne Speech was the time to reveal to the people and to the House of Commons what the future legislative program held in store.

If the Government actually had a program, we must conclude that it deliberately hid it from the scrutiny of the Opposition, from the media and from Canadian people; in which case it was deceptive and secretive. On the other hand, if the government really has no program, it confirms what many suspected about the Conservatives but could not prove during the election campaign. In any case, we are all at sea on a ship of fools. Either way, the prospects are less than ideal.

One would have thought that the Tories would have realized the great possibilities and opportunities of the moment. Here is a Party which was swept into power on the basis of a mandate for change. What a golden opportunity the moment presented. The Throne Speech could have placed before Canadian people the real issues and problems that beset us and this planet as we move toward the 21st century. The speech could have suggested the goals and the agenda for the next four years. It could have given us a vision of the future. Here was a chance worthy of this nation to explain what were the dangers, challenges, opportunities and directions of the future that it would choose. Instead, it was a myopic speech—a narcissistic speech. It was a speech that was intended to anaesthetize us so as to make us feel good.

The Speech from the Throne was out of touch with the real world. It did not tell us about the real problems and challenges we face, and for that reason it never came to grips with how the Government would deal with them. For example, where did the speech tell us that long before we reach the 21st century we will have already been swept up in a technological revolution of computerization and robotry which will require an entirely different orientation and adaptation? Where did the speech tell us that we will need a very highly educated population; that we will require new definitions of work, work time and work place; that there will be new experiments, models and programs for work-sharing and profit-sharing, and for leisure and productivity? Why did the Government not tell us honestly that the middle class will be eroded as more and more people will be dragged down from white and blue collar jobs into lower paying occupations? What does this Conservative Government have to say about how it will prevent this erosion of the middle class?

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In the face of technological change, what does the Government have to say about the large number of experienced, valuable and talented people over 50 who will be laid off, or to our young people about ways to prepare themselves for this new age? What did the speech tell us about the world food and agricultural crisis? Did it remind us that we in Canada are using up our precious resources of soil and water at so frighteningly rapid a rate that unless we act, in 25 years we may be unable to export food because we will be barely able to feed ourselves? What did the speech say about the ravages of acid rain? What did it have to say about lead, poisons and pesticides in our soil, air and water? What did it have to say about the massive problems we have in Canada and throughout the world?

The Speech from the Throne could have given a keynote to the people and told us how Canada was going to mobilize in the face of these challenges. It could have put the truth before us about the tragic hunger and destitution of Third World nations. It could have spoken about the devastation suffered by their economies, caused in part by high interest rates in the U.S. and in part by the unwillingness of the Americans to enter into a North-South dialogue. The speech could have told us what we thought about that. It could have told us the truth about the hunger, disease and poverty that stalks most of humanity. It could have given us specific goals in legislation which the Government had to propose.

Nothing was said, Mr. Speaker, about the tragic famine in Ethiopia. Never mind about the ravages of hunger afflicting the entire continent of Africa. All of this incredible suffering did not merit a sympathetic reference other than "continuing need for developmental assistance", and "cost effective and valuable humanitarian work done by our voluntary and non-governmental organizations". No program, no plans, no solutions, no action mentioned. Just a cynical, cruel, uncaring, passive, *laissez-faire* Tory attitude which does not want to talk about the real problems because it wants us to feel good. It was only after media coverage of the Ethiopian disaster