

*The Address—Mr. Fulton*

the Liberal majority was 1,319; in February, 1950, the actual majority over the C.C.F. amounted to 138 votes. The Liberal party won by a fair majority in 1948, and by a whopping majority in 1949. They only "skinned through" in 1950. The Minister of Agriculture says that the election was fought on federal issues. If that is correct, and if this vote on February 8 last is indicative of the opinion of the people of Saskatchewan, if a provincial election had been held on that date the C.C.F. party would have won 38 of the 52 seats.

**Mr. E. D. Fulton (Kamloops):** Mr. Speaker, in taking part in this debate on the speech from the throne, I should like to deal first with two problems of general interest. Then, as other speakers have done this afternoon, I should like to turn my attention to the problems of trade as they affect the agricultural situation in Canada today.

The two general subjects I should like to mention before passing on to trade and the remarks of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Gardiner) concerning it are, first, the widespread appeal which has been made throughout this country for the setting up of a veterans affairs committee at this session. Every member has had requests from the Legion branches throughout his constituency, as well as from many of the women's auxiliaries to the Legion and other interested bodies, asking that that committee be set up. It is a request which is widespread and well-founded. This request cannot be disposed of by the brusque statement of the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Gregg), that the government does not intend to set up such a committee. There has been no amplification of that statement, nor has there been any explanation of the reasons which led the minister to that conclusion. I have no hesitation in saying that, in view of the problems which confront this country and the veterans as citizens of this country, there is every need for that committee. We on this side of the house, as well as the veterans organizations throughout the country, are not satisfied with that answer. We shall continue to press for the setting up of a committee until our efforts meet with success.

The other general question to which I should like to refer is the widespread agitation for the immediate removal of the means test. I am only one of 262 members, and I do not say I have received more of the printed cards in favour of that request than the others—I may not have received as many. I do know, however, that my correspondence has become increasingly difficult to keep up with owing to the number of those requests which have come to hand. If the number I am receiving

is any measure of the number the other members are receiving, then there must be many hundreds of thousands coming into this House of Commons from the people throughout the country. That volume of requests, Mr. Speaker, would not be in such proportion as we find it, if it were not for the fact that the people of Canada, particularly the old age pensioners, were encouraged, by statements made by government candidates from coast to coast during the election campaign in June of last year, to believe that the means test would be removed.

**Mr. Knowles:** Including Winnipeg South.

**Mr. Fulton:** I do not believe in pressure groups, Mr. Speaker, any more than do you or any other hon. member; but this is not a pressure group. It is a heartfelt request from the people of Canada for the implementation of what they understood, by the ordinary meaning of words, to be a declared part of government policy if the government was returned, as it was, in June. It is no sufficient answer for the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) to put this matter off by saying that we cannot do it without agreement with the provinces. He did not say that in June or May of 1949. It is no sufficient answer to say that we are appointing a parliamentary committee. In the election campaign of 1949 he did not say that he would do that.

The impression was clearly given, and it clearly remains, that if this government was returned to power a contributory pension scheme would be introduced and the means test would be eliminated. To refrain from implementing that promise is nothing short of a breach of faith, Mr. Speaker, and a denial of the understanding deliberately given during the course of the election campaign. In the course of debate in these last two days we have heard a good deal about double talk and about saying one thing and meaning another. The history of this promise to remove the means test is merely a part of the over-all pattern.

I should now like to deal particularly with the subject of Canada's trade situation. Probably no other problem looms so large in the minds of the people of this country as that of declining markets, in overseas countries, for Canada's produce. We in the opposition have pressed for one step to be taken that might solve that problem. We have pressed, and will continue to press, for the summoning of a commonwealth trade conference. That subject was debated for one whole day in this house, Mr. Speaker; and I think it is significant to note that during that whole day's debate there was only one speaker on the government side who even bothered to discuss the question of