

The Address—Mr. Taylor

Before the last election the Government promised the world, and barely squeaked into office with 43 per cent of the popular vote. That is almost seven points less than it had in the previous election four years earlier. There was no clear mandate given to this Government on any issue, but the public's expectations ran high. The people who voted Conservative were looking for a Government that would look after those who were needlessly battling an out of control economy. Those people have been let down.

Looking back over the past three months that elected Members of the House of Commons have been unable to question the Government on its activities, for those of us in western Canada, in particular, there are more questions than answers and the economy continues to oppress ordinary Canadians.

The Throne Speech which is supposed to give the country, through the Government, its direction for the next year does not address the problems I have seen by touring through my constituency and talking to my constituents about their concerns. My colleagues have also expressed to me the concerns of their constituents gathered during this three-month recess.

What I have heard over that period of time are complaints about high interest rates, poorly designed and administered agriculture programs, such as the Drought Assistance Program now under way.

Tax reform is not only more complicated but seems to be costing us more money. The subject I have heard more about than any other, except perhaps high interest rates, is the removal by the Minister of State for Grains and Oilseeds (Mr. Mayer) of oats from the export jurisdiction of the Canadian Wheat Board.

Farmers in rural Canada did not give this Government a mandate to tamper with any of these government programs, let alone the one which guarantees the sale of their product. Western farmers have protested this move loudly and strongly, but the Government has cotton in its ears. Perhaps it has chaff between its ears, Madam Speaker. Whatever, the Government has failed to hear, to listen to, or to understand these voices from the Prairies, just as it failed to hear or chose to ignore the pleadings of Canadians prior to entering into the Free Trade Agreement.

The last time I was in this Chamber was during the week before Christmas when I spoke on the free trade legislation. I never felt so bad in my life as I stood here expressing the opinions of my constituents, and the members of the Government across the way talked and yelled and interrupted my speech constantly throughout

that time. They did, I might add, the same thing to every speech from members of the Opposition throughout this House. They refused to listen, Madam Speaker, and they refuse to listen now. The people of Canada, and particularly the people of western Canada that I represent, want lower interest rates, well administered programs, more fairness in our income tax system and strong marketing boards to sustain and build a rural economy.

Instead, in the past three months we have had just the opposite, and in the future what can we expect? What do you see when you look at the content of the Throne Speech? A lot of rhetoric, a lot of words with very little thought behind them, a plan for the future that begs for detail, and for more information. How can I begin to plan my work for this session of Parliament with this document?

I am concerned about the financial crisis in agriculture. I am concerned because every single community in my constituency depends on the economic well-being of agriculture to survive. In reading this Throne Speech, I do not know what are the Government's plans for the future. There is only one reference in this entire document to agriculture. Only once is the word "agriculture" even written in this document. Can you believe that? An industry as large as agriculture in such crisis in this country, in such turmoil, and there is only one fleeting reference to it in this entire document, this Government's plan for the future.

An Hon. Member: Shameful, shameful!

Mr. Taylor: What is that reference, Madam Speaker, a reference to the trouble in the international marketplace? I agree there is an international problem and the Government must be vigilant. It must be prepared to fight for Canadians in the international arena, but the Government must also be prepared to stand by our producers here at home. We cannot abandon those producers while we go off and fight a foreign war. The Government seems to be doing just that.

• (1640)

I have been talking about what is not in the Throne Speech.

Before I conclude, there are two more points I want to make. Just one paragraph after the Government's flimsy reference to native economic development programs, the Throne Speech reports that this Government will continue its privatization of federal Crown corporations. While I do not support the concept of privatization, I have at least to applaud this Government for saying what it means in this case.