

*The Address—Mr. McLure*

second portion of my remarks in the debate on the address in reply to the speech from the throne.

It is not my intention, Mr. Speaker, to endeavour to deal with the many excellent speeches that have been made on this address in reply. I may say that I have listened to a good many of them and have read the rest of them in *Hansard*. The speeches made this session were of a high order. Running through all of them might be noticed one bone of contention, namely the high cost of living. Many different viewpoints were taken, but all hon. members finally agreed that the high cost of living was still increasing. It was rather amusing to note the many speeches that had been made by the government members, and how they had to juggle a good deal, in order to satisfy the voice of conscience, when they were representing their constituencies. After all this matter of the cost of living is a serious question. But after debating it to a certain extent, they then had to turn around and obey the commands of the administration when it came to a vote. Consequently, it was rather amusing to note the number who had to juggle with their consciences when they were trying to prove that the cost of living was going down instead of up. To me one most interesting speech was that of the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) himself. The Prime Minister, for his text, took from the speech from the throne one sentence which reads as follows:

The anti-inflationary measures already in force have checked the upward trend of prices of goods and services affected by their operation.

It is unfortunate that it is our custom and practice for the advisers of His Majesty to have items of this kind put into the speech from the throne, because with all their arguments in favour of it, the fact still remains that we have the high cost of living with us, and that it is going up daily. We know that it is going up. We also know that there is some question as to the accuracy of that sentence which I have quoted from the speech from the throne, in view of the facts as we know them today.

When the Prime Minister was discussing this question it appeared to me, as I listened to him throughout his address, that he was taking the role of a high-class lawyer pleading his case and that his whole idea was to secure acquittal in case these anti-inflationary measures did not work as he had anticipated. I cannot deal with all that the Prime Minister said, and I will come now to a few words with reference to the speech from the throne itself.

In its opening sentences the speech from the throne gives the reasons why members were called in on this occasion; and the chief reason was to bring in legislation with reference to the old age pension at age 70 without a means test. I must say, Mr. Speaker, that this was the first legislation I have ever seen in this house that was agreed to 100 per cent by members of all parties, on both sides of the house. It is gratifying to note this fact, because from time to time the Liberal government have claimed that they were the fathers of these security measures. Now, however, as a result of this session, we find that there is an even break for everybody. When the next election campaign comes around, the Liberal candidates will not be able to go out, as has been done by them in the past, and shout from the housetops: "We gave you the old age pension. If you do not vote for us in this election, we will take it away from you." That is one cry they will not be able to have in the next election campaign when it comes along, in 1952 or 1953.

However, the only sting in this legislation with respect to the old age pension at age 70 without the means test is the great difficulty some people are having in securing proof of age. I am sure that the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Martin) did not wish to make it so difficult for some people. There ought to be some way in which assurance can be given to the department that a man is 70 years of age or over. It is quite reasonable that the government should have certain proof, but why make it so hard to get? Why not accept a certificate, under oath, from several residents, to the effect that they believe that John Brown or Tom Jones is over 70 years of age?

I know of a number of cases in which difficulty has been experienced. Yesterday I had a letter from one man. I do not know how he is going to procure proof of age. He does not even remember distinctly where he resided when the census of 1871 or the census of 1881 was taken. I do not know whether the department will accept the census of 1901 in his case, because he is considerably over the age of 70.

In looking further into the speech from the throne I find that there are several grave omissions with regard to these pensions. One in particular that I wish to mention is this: Nothing is said about security for the incapacitated and crippled people of our country. The government owes no higher duty to society than its duty of service to the incapacitated and crippled, and those unable to earn a livelihood for themselves. This question has been brought up time and again by many hon. members, including myself, since