

The Address—Mr. Clark

Mr. Clark: And it is important for all of us in the House to end that personal preoccupation with René Lévesque. The message which we are interested in delivering is not to the premier of the province of Quebec; it is to the people of the province of Quebec.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: We believe that there is a much wider range of opportunity for accomplishment with us as a government prepared to seek new approaches with the people of Canada than there was with the former government, which was determined to continue old quarrels with the Premier of Quebec.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: If the hon. member for Ottawa-Carleton (Mr. Pepin) does not stop interjecting, I will quote sections of his report to him.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Clark: The results of the election in May left all of our parties deprived, in one way or another, of the balanced representation that might be considered ideal. That is a problem for our parties but it is a great opportunity for this Parliament. We can rise above narrow partisanship and help each other to achieve a better understanding of how our respective regions perceive, and are affected by, these national issues. I am not suggesting that any of the parties argue their own views less aggressively; only that in this Parliament, and especially on this subject, each of us should be more open to the views of the others.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1630)

Mr. Clark: That will not be easy. It will require of us in this House an act of mutual trust, just as the conduct of federal-provincial relations, in our view, required a new spirit of mutual trust between Ottawa and the provinces.

The test of our federalism and its strength is not in the undoubted power of the central government to have its way. Rather it is in the willingness of the partners to act together. The success of our federalism will lie in our ability to accommodate the different kinds of communities Canadians choose to live in. These communities have different economic potentials, different economic strategies, and they have different cultural and social goals.

Confederation gave to the provinces not only real powers—and in some cases exclusive powers—which could be exercised in those fields, but it assigned to the provinces the sources of revenue, the economic means to exercise those powers effectively. That was the spirit in which the forests, the mines, the natural resources of another day and the revenues therefrom were assigned to the provinces. That is the spirit in which in 1979 this government agreed that the provinces which have offshore resources should control their development. The extent to which all provinces have the economic means to

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exercise their powers will determine their ability to pursue their different cultural, social and economic goals. The greater their dependence on Ottawa for their revenues, the less likely they are to develop that diversity which is at the heart of the Canadian idea.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: In these so-called constitutional debates the real question at issue was not the law of the country but the nature of the country.

Miss Bégin: It is the country.

Mr. Clark: Can we afford to have Canadians doing different things in different ways in different parts of the country? I ask that of the former minister: can we afford to have Canadians doing different things in different ways in different parts of the country? Not only do I think we can, I believe we must if we are to honour the spirit of this country. One thing which is beyond debate, to my knowledge, is that everyone in the House accepts the absolute necessity of a central government strong enough to guarantee basic standards of service, instruments of growth and national co-ordination, and indeed capable of initiating and expressing national policy.

When it comes to the national interest, the final responsibility and the ultimate authority lie with Parliament. If paramount national interests were endangered by federal-provincial conflict or federal-provincial stalemate, this government and Parliament could act. There is no question that we would have the support of Canadian people in so acting. But asserting that ultimate power in emergencies is quite different from insinuating that ultimate power every day. The nation is more than the central government. The need for a national transportation policy, to take one example, is of an order quite different from the need for a national lottery. The nation will survive the provinces running the national lottery.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: Indeed the nation will be much stronger if the government in Newfoundland uses wealth from offshore resources to build its economy directly, rather than having part of the proceeds recycled back from Ottawa. One fundamental fact is that there is a limit to what Ottawa can do, because there is a limit to what Ottawa can know. Ottawa cannot know the local needs, natures, and requirements of different corners of this country as well as the properly constituted governments of those provinces.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition quoted Edward Blake and approved of him. I will quote Sir John A. Macdonald on a matter where—one of the few times—I think Sir John was wrong. Sir John A. Macdonald would have preferred a unitary government. That is what he wanted; that is what he dreamed about. That was the model he had in his mind, but Sir John A. Macdonald was a practical, pragmatic man. He wanted to make the nation work. He was more interested in having a nation which worked than having a nation which accorded to his theories. He recognized that the nation was not built the