

Speech from the Throne

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jamieson: I was disappointed in some respects that neither the Leader of the Opposition nor the leader of the New Democratic Party chose to make any reference in their remarks either to national unity in the context of the Official Languages Act or anything relating thereto. Unfortunately, when references are made to this subject they tend, as has been evidenced in this debate, to generate a degree of emotion. This is not a bad idea, but I suggest it is the wrong kind of emotion. For my part, I have no desire either during this debate or at any other time to inflame or add to the difficulties which we are presently experiencing. I can say that as someone who has been given great opportunities since becoming a Canadian and has travelled this country widely from one end to another, I understand and feel a kinship with those whose mother tongue is French.

There is not a great deal of difference down underneath. Certain stories are told. They may be the kind of derogatory stories, although perhaps humorous, about the backwoods French Canadian woodcutter and the Newfie stories about which we hear so much. I feel there is a certain distinction about the fact we have both reached a maturity that enables us to laugh at ourselves.

Although we Newfoundlanders do not suffer the added problem that alienation creates when there is a language barrier, nevertheless I believe that we in Newfoundland and I as one Newfoundlander understand how it feels to experience this kind of alienation. Of my own achievements as far as they relate to government activities, the one of which I am most proud is that this Parliament, with the support of all parties, passed and endorsed enthusiastically the Official Languages Act.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jamieson: I hope there is no suggestion at the moment that any party or any member of this House is prepared to compromise the principles of that act. If there are injustices, of course we have to deal with them; but we must deal with them on both sides. I appeal to hon. members to realize that when the Official Languages Act was set up and, in fact, when this House felt in its heart the necessity to right historic wrongs, it removed it from the political arena and tried to lift it above politics. It tried to make this an issue that would unite Canadians and not one to divide it. I believe this will continue to be the case. I am prepared to stand upon the achievements of this government and its policies in this regard and, believe me, there is no better place that I would rather stand.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Jamieson). He left me wondering as to what he said. As he said, no wonder the young people are questioning. They are questioning speeches such as he made when he should have been dealing with the substantive issues that were almost contained in the Speech from the Throne and with which he did not deal. Instead of that, he erected a Throne Speech of the opposition. He gave me the impression that I was over there, he was over here and he was delivering a speech in criticism of a Throne Speech that came from us.

[Mr. Jamieson.]

I wondered for a moment where I was in the House, whether I was on Your Honour's right or left.

I say it was dishonest for the minister to say the things that he did. He called the New Democratic Party sanctimonious. He ended his speech with a plea for national unity. He criticized the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) for things that he said, and called it motherhood; yet that is exactly what he was doing. As I sat here I tried to sort out all these matters. He drew an analogy between himself and other impecunious Liberal members who sit on the government side, and their inability to pay the rent. This put me in mind of the writings of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) when he made the allusion to the brave donkeys lining up at the trough.

It pulled at the strings of my heart to hear the difficulties that the Minister of Transport and his colleagues have gone through. I contrasted his remarks with the difficulties being experienced in every riding in this country by constituents of every member of this House, those sitting opposite and on this side. They are undergoing extreme hardship because of the inefficiency and every other shortcoming of the government with regard to the administration of Unemployment Insurance. I listened to the hon. member for Essex (Mr. Whelan) talk this afternoon about the streamlined efforts that are being made by the Unemployment Insurance offices. I still think of the people in my constituency, and I am sure in others, who have to apply for welfare because of the inefficiencies of that department.

The minister spoke in sanctimonious terms and made accusations against the leader of the New Democratic Party regarding the Official Languages Act. I have sat in this House as a member of the government as well as a member of the opposition. I know the record of the former prime minister, the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker), with regard to bilingualism in this country. I know that the cubicles in the corners of this chamber were installed under his prime ministership. I know that bilingual cheques came about under his term in office as prime minister. The simultaneous English-French translation system came about under his prime ministership. Suddenly we hear the Minister of Transport being as sanctimonious as hell about being the inventor of all these innovations.

An hon. Member: Order.

Mr. Nielsen: Someone on the other side said "Order". I did not say "Fuzz off"; I do not spell it that way. I did not say "God-damn". However, if we have reached the stage in this House where these epithets are in order—

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): But they are not.

Mr. Nielsen: —then at least I can refer to the place below.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Don't act like the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau).

Mr. Nielsen: I remind the Minister of Transport that the Bilingualism and Biculturalism Commission started under the previous Prime Minister, yet the minister stands in his place, sanctimonious as all get out, and speaks as