

The Address—Mr. Boutin

In his opening remarks in this debate the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam dwelt on the fact that the government has made three attempts to formulate this pension legislation. Is it any wonder, therefore, that there are doubts and apprehensions in the minds of certain hon. members about the competence of the government, and certain scepticism of its intention so far as the parliamentary committee is concerned?

Members of the government have brought this doubt upon themselves. After years of neglect during their long term of office, when the Liberals found themselves returned to power they tried to bring forward this ill conceived, badly thought out legislation within 60 days. The government has been the victim of its own propaganda—those infamous 60 days of derision, those 60 days which did inestimable harm to Canada both at home and abroad.

Now there is an opportunity to repair some of the damage. I hope the Minister of National Health and Welfare, the Prime Minister and other members of the government will take advantage of the opportunity offered by this proposed parliamentary committee, and will listen with an open mind to the various points of view that will be expressed, with the intention of strengthening this legislation. They have had three shots at it. Let them not be afraid to take advice. Let them get it right this time. I say to them, for heaven's sake don't louse it up again.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-André Boutin (Dorchester): Mr. Speaker, like all the hon. members who have taken part in this debate so far, I extend my warmest congratulations to the mover and seconder of the address in reply to the speech from the throne.

Since the beginning of this session, many interesting subjects have been broached but there is one which all the previous speakers referred to, and that is national unity and the ways most of them put forward to preserve the Canadian confederation for the centennial celebrations in 1967.

Some speakers made very constructive and acceptable proposals. We hope that the Canadian parliament will follow them up in order to avoid on our own soil unfortunate events which would destroy any chance of understanding and brotherhood between the two great nations which built Canada.

That unity must not be arrived at by humbling either of the two great races but by respecting each one's aspirations and by agreeing to hold a dialogue between equals as provided by the confederative pact.

[Mr. Chaplin.]

People in some quarters will have to give up the idea that French Canadians must count for only one tenth of Canada. If the provisions of the confederative pact are to be respected, French speaking Canadians and English-speaking Canadians will have to deal as equals, that is to say one great race dealing with another one, and not nine provinces dealing and discussing with a single other province, as has always been the case so far.

Mr. Speaker, I just heard the member for Montmagny-L'Islet (Mr. Berger) complain that our leaders were not in the house; I wonder whether he is blind or too much of a Liberal to notice that at present there are only some 25 Liberal members in the house and out of those 25 members there are only three ministers. The hon. member would be better advised to put his own house in order before complaining about the condition of his neighbour's.

The hon. member was just criticizing our leader for having made some statements about the state of mind existing at present in the province of Quebec.

I would point out to the hon. member that if such a state of mind exists in Quebec, it is the logical consequence of the shameful laziness on the part of the Liberal and Conservative members of that province who always took the easy way out instead of rising in defence of the Quebec people and urging in the house that the French Canadians' rights and privileges be respected.

I am not surprised at the words of the member for Montmagny-L'Islet. We have been hearing such rubbish since 1867. Where did that lead us to? To our present predicament, that is to the growing friction between the two great races.

You, Conservative and Liberal members of the province of Quebec, woke up in 1962, after sleeping like Rip Van Winkle for 95 years; it is therefore not surprising that some members of the government are rusted. Keep your eyes open now, you cannot do otherwise.

This being said, Mr. Speaker, I should like to speak now about a matter particularly affecting the riding I have the honour to represent in the house. It is the problem of agriculture, which is the chief occupation of the people in Dorchester and one of their most important sources of revenue.

After travelling through my riding for almost two years and having several conversations with the persons concerned, I realized that the conclusions arrived at in recent years had proved still more disastrous than some statistics or investigations would have us believe.