

I should now like to refer to a subject that has an important bearing on the future lives of a large segment of the people in my constituency, the servicemen and their families at base Gagetown. I refer to the defence establishment and its probable future commitments. Until a few years ago, a sizeable field formation was stationed at this important training establishment made up of highly trained and well disciplined soldiers. Their role was to reinforce, as necessary, the NATO commitment in Europe and to act as an immediately available resource of trained manpower if such were needed in a civil emergency.

They proved their worth in the latter responsibility most admirably and comported themselves well during the FLQ crisis. On several occasions they responded to requests from the New Brunswick government for assistance in fighting forest fires, flood control and such other emergencies. I hold these men in the highest regard, as do the people of New Brunswick. But I seriously doubt that the same capability is there today because of the change of organization and the serious depletion that has occurred in army unit strength.

It is not generally realized that when a drastic cutback is ordered by government, the personnel released are in most cases those in the junior ranks. In an emergency such as I mentioned earlier, our main requirement is for fully trained and well disciplined private soldiers—and they cannot be produced in a few weeks; in fact, I believe it requires at least 18 months to make a trained soldier out of a recruit.

The point I wish to make is that we cannot expect our armed forces properly to carry out their role unless they are made up of balanced and collectively trained units, capable immediately of undertaking present commitments and future commitments into which the government of this country enters, whether they be of a peace-keeping nature or related to emergencies that arise in this country. We must support our armed forces in achieving this posture.

• (2030)

Like other provinces, in varying degree, New Brunswick and the counties of York and Sunbury have the problem of inadequate support for the owners of small farms. We must make it possible for these holdings to pass from one generation to another without crippling tax penalties. We must make it less expensive for these people to purchase new equipment, to improve the efficiency of their operations and thus enable them and their successors to make a reasonable living off the land. Unless such measures are undertaken very soon, we and our children will be looking at vast areas of wasteland and abandoned farms on which the soil is fertile and capable of producing good food.

In the unique position in which we find ourselves in this House, Mr. Speaker, one cannot blame the smaller opposition parties for taking advantage of the present situation. However, they should bear in mind the words of the Prime Minister in regard to our relations with the United States, that one can never really be at ease when sleeping with an elephant, unless one wants to be a mouse.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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The Address—Mr. Haidasz

Mr. Howie: I have attempted to constructively place before this House proposals to improve the way of life of all those who live in the Atlantic provinces. Whether these or better suggestions are acted upon is not important. What is important is that we act decisively, and now.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Stanley Haidasz (Minister of State): Mr. Speaker, in opening my remarks I should like to congratulate you on your re-election to this House, and to join those hon. members who during the course of the debate have paid well deserved tribute to your wisdom, fairness and many other skills. I am both proud and happy that you have been enthusiastically, and indeed unanimously selected again to guide the proceedings of this chamber during the twenty-ninth parliament. I congratulate the Deputy Speaker on his election, and I also congratulate, for their excellent performances, the mover and the seconder of the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

I recall vividly my emotions, my excitement and feelings of humility, mixed with great satisfaction, when in 1957 I arrived in this House for the first time. Today, my feelings are no less intense. I stand here again with mixed feelings of humility and pride as the first Minister of State whose sole responsibility it is to implement and develop further the multicultural policy of the government.

Mr. Paproski: You had better do a good job, Stanley.

Mr. Haidasz: To these feelings I have to add, in all sincerity, my sense of gratitude to my parents, who immigrated to Canada from Poland many years ago, for their hard work, privations and guidance without which I would not have completed my education nor succeeded in my chosen career, to my teachers and friends in Toronto where I was born and educated, to my professors at the University of Ottawa, to the constituents of my multicultural riding of Parkdale for the clear mandate with which they sent me back to this House, and to the community of which I am a proud member, for their encouragement to enter into and to continue a role in the political life of this country.

I was deeply touched, Sir, by the reaction with which my appointment was greeted by the various ethnocultural communities across the country and their periodicals which, although in languages other than English or French are, nevertheless, Canadian in spirit. I was not surprised, of course, by the expression of warm, proud satisfaction by the Polish-Canadian press. I was, however, greatly moved by the sincere, spontaneous statements and congratulations flowing from other ethnocultural groups. I am grateful for their kindness and assure them of my continued support and receptiveness to their advice on how I and my dedicated officials can improve the efforts which have already begun in giving multiculturalism genuine substance in Canada.

All of us here are sensitive to the needs of ethnic groups and the richness they add to Canadian society, because the multicultural policy received support from all parties when it was announced by our Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), on October 8, 1971.

Mr. Paproski: All we want is more money.