

Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements

sides of the House that they are few in number and that the noise they create far exceeds their popular support.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Epp: Having stated that, I would be incorrect in saying that there is nothing seriously wrong with Confederation as western Canadians see it. There is a strong feeling of alienation felt by people who support all parties. There is a strong feeling that we are so far removed from the centres of decision-making power that we really count for very little.

Perhaps over the years we have developed an inferiority complex, but no matter what the cause the fact remains that this feeling of alienation is there. We are concerned that the problems of unemployment, investment, growth, and expansion are not getting the serious consideration which is needed because we keep concentrating on questions of Confederation. One would think that after 110 years of our history we would have grown mature enough to recognize that this union is here to stay and that we can develop it.

● (2010)

Although there is alienation in the west, we are still Canadians. We may criticize, say something is wrong with Confederation; we may not like the centralized decision-making power of the government, of any government, but that does not make us bigots. We have a deep love of our land and very much want to see our particular area of the world developing.

I believe the *Economist* puts it too strongly in its article when they talk of hatred in the west. Let me quote Mr. Gwyn's article.

Hatred is too glib, a shade too strong a word. Indifference, impatience, frustration, contempt, are better descriptions of the west's mood.

I believe he is right.

Not only do we feel alienated; we are frustrated. We believe nobody is listening to us, that the government thinks that we are few in numbers and consequently not worth listening to. Mr. Speaker, we are fed up with brokerage politics. We have seen one area of Canada pitted against another. If one may use a Biblical reference, I guess we are like the early apostles, like voices crying in the wilderness. No one wants to listen.

The west also recognizes that it lacks input into central decision-making, as is reflected in federal-provincial relations. I say that because the premiers of western Canada have raised this very same complaint, but little has been done to rectify it. We are not interested in tokenism. We want to be involved. Is this government genuinely interested in western views, or does it look on us only as people who live somewhere in the west and who keep repeating a long litany of complaints?

What has happened since the days of July, 1973? When the Liberals formed a minority government the Trudeau administration was deeply concerned about the erosion of its support in western Canada. What did it do? It called the Western Economic Opportunities Conference in July, 1973. Oh, it was a great media performance. A lot of work was put into that conference. Position papers were submitted, and we western

[Mr. Epp.]

Canadians were in high hopes of seeing solutions to some of our problems emerge from that conference, of seeing the west become more greatly involved in central decision-making. Unfortunately little changed. In 1974 the government was returned to power with a majority, and all the promises made at the Western Economic Opportunities Conference went by the board.

Interestingly enough, the views expressed by the western premiers at the recently concluded federal-provincial conference were virtually the same as those expressed in Calgary in July, 1973.

The list of concerns is long, and I shall mention a few. The hon. member for Churchill (Mr. Smith) has repeatedly made representations for the upgrading and further use of the port of Churchill. The farmers of Saskatchewan, farmers of north-western Manitoba, and members of the Hudson's Bay Route Association have asked that the port of Churchill be utilized to its fullest potential. But the government has not acted; we have seen little action in that regard. Western Canadians have longed complained about tariffs, those applying to farm products and those applying to manufactured goods. Hopefully the present round of negotiations in Geneva will correct some long-standing grievances.

I will not go into the question of freight rates for it has been repeated ad nauseam; nevertheless, that problem still exists.

If I were parochial I would discuss at great length Air Canada's move from Winnipeg. Some people think that the move of certain Air Canada facilities from Winnipeg to Montreal eight years ago has been forgotten, that the move was never questioned. In the 1974 election campaign the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) dropped into our area and, as a result, we got a hangar. You should see that hangar now, on the west side of the airport. Yes, it is being built.

Mr. Hamilton (Swift Current-Maple Creek): What a hangar, Jake.

Mr. Epp: Yes, it is quite a hangar. Ironically, that hangar is not on MOT land. I understand the department must negotiate with the Department of National Defence in order to have access to the hangar.

Mr. Hamilton (Swift Current-Maple Creek): If they want to do repairs, it takes them 45 minutes to get from the air base to the hangar.

Mr. Epp: I have mentioned some of our grievances, but we see little evidence of the government's willingness to tackle them.

Let me raise another matter of importance to our nation. We want to develop our resource industry, certainly; but also, we want to develop a mature and economically viable secondary industry. In this connection let me put on record the conclusions set out in the presentation of the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce to the conference of July, 1973. It said: