

If Manitoba has on occasion contributed to Canada's difficulties, Manitoba has also contributed beyond expectations in some of Canada's finest hours. It is notable, for example, that during World War I, while Manitoba made up only about one-twentieth of the population of Canada, one out of every nine servicemen in uniform hailed from that province. Nor were Manitobans lacking in courage, because out of a total of 34 Canadians who were awarded the Victoria Cross in that war, 13 were Manitobans.

Over the years, Manitoba has been living proof that a Canadian mosaic is indeed possible. No other province in Canada has as unique a racial and cultural history and structure.

Starting with a population almost evenly divided between English and French speaking—a legislature made up of an equal number of French and English speaking members—the province evolved by immigration into the most multicultural of Canadian provinces.

While it would be incorrect to say that there has been no friction, for the most part our people have lived in harmony, have accepted that people can be different and that the difference can be an advantage. The result of this multicultural base has been seen throughout Manitoba, seen in the flourishing of the arts—for example, we have a wide variety of ethnic music and dance groups, the largest music festival in the world, the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, the Manitoba Theatre Centre, to mention only a few with national and international reputations.

The cultural variations also have led to pioneering ventures in education, with the University of Manitoba leading the way in establishing separate chairs for Icelandic, Ukrainian and Judaic studies.

I have great pride in my province and confidence that it can play a most important role in Canadian affairs. Because of this, I accepted the honour offered to me by the Prime Minister to enter this important chamber. I hope that I can make a contribution here.

In accepting the honour of being a member of this chamber, I do so, first of all, as a Canadian, but most emphatically also as a western Canadian, an enthusiastic, unrepentant western Canadian.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. Molgat: Honourable senators, I hope this comment will not be misunderstood. It is not meant in a narrow parochial sense, nor is it meant in a negative way. On the contrary, it is said with the profound belief that Manitoba and western Canada can and should contribute more to Confederation, that we want to play a greater part in the councils of our nation and that it is to Canada's advantage that all parts should grow and expand.

Much has been said and written over the years about western discontent. More recently, some new terms have been added. We hear about western alienation and then, much more recently again, about western separatism. I reject these terms and I would rather speak about western involvement and western participation. Manitobans

who this year celebrated their 100th anniversary in Confederation, with great enthusiasm, are not about to leave Confederation. But this does not mean that we do not believe that Confederation could not work better or that changes are not warranted.

The changes that we seek are both economic and political. Quite frankly, we are concerned about the growing concentration of economic and political power in the three main centres of central Canada. We are concerned that far too many of our political decisions must be made here in Ottawa. We are concerned that our representatives in both houses have now to spend so much time in Ottawa that they are in danger of losing contacts with the areas that they represent. We are concerned that for far too many of our economic decisions we must travel down to Montreal and to Toronto. We do not seek handouts from Ottawa, Montreal or Toronto: we simply seek a fair participation.

I must confess that we are embarrassed, at times. We feel at times like poor cousins, coming here hat in hand.

I well remember my many trips from Winnipeg to Ottawa to protest, for example, the closing of the Air Canada overhaul base in the City of Winnipeg. I am sure that most Canadians must have been sick of hearing about our complaints. And yet, we felt we had a fair claim. We felt that, in the interests of Canada, in the interests of building up every part of Canada, our cause should have been listened to before the decision had been made, not after.

More recently, my trips have been concerned with other problems. These were the closing of military bases in Manitoba—Rivers and Gimli. Not important, it may be, in the overall Canadian context, but very important to a small province with a population of less than one million people, that two important military bases are closed—and important when we consider that in the Province of Manitoba the only defence expenditure is in military bases. We do not sell trucks or cars or electronic equipment or the other things that the Defence Department procures. Those are procured basically in central Canada, not in Manitoba, not in the West.

When the auto pact was proceeded with, western Canada gave it its support. We recognized that it was good for Canada, but the auto pact has not done one thing to produce employment in Manitoba or in the West.

The plants have been built in central Canada and our cars and trucks have not been any cheaper. We do not want to sound simply like complaining western Canadians. That is not our approach. What we want is a fair and reasonable approach to economic problems and political problems in this country.

Honourable senators may ask what can be done. In fairness, the Government has taken certain steps and the establishing of the Department of Regional Economic Expansion is certainly a good forward step.

This department of government is prepared to assist private industry to locate in areas of the country which do not have the same advantages as central Canada. But what about the government departments themselves? If