

forces them towards a national consensus are the national political parties.

Honourable senators, the question before us is that of meeting more effectively the economic and cultural aspirations of the various regions of Canada. For me that poses three questions: First, what are the elements of the present crisis? Second, how does the Senate's constitutional mission match the demands of that crisis? Third, what can the capacity of the Senate and of the party system do to "meet more effectively" that crisis?

The first question, then, is: What is the nature of the crisis? It is presumptuous of me, of course, to think that I can fully describe or diagnose it. But as a Canadian, and now as a senator, I think it cowardly not to try. In the 1960s I was a member of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. One of the greatest experiences of my life was my association with its members, and particularly with its co-chairman, André Laurendeau.

● (2040)

In February of 1965, in a preliminary report, that commission reported to the nation its need to share with fellow citizens the experience they had been through and the lessons taken so far. They stated that experience very simply by saying that they had been:

—driven to the conclusion that Canada, without being fully conscious of the fact, is passing through the greatest crisis in its history.

The source of the crisis lies in the Province of Quebec; that fact could be established without an extensive inquiry. There are other secondary sources in the French-speaking minorities of the other provinces and in the "ethnic minorities"—although this does not mean in any way that to us such problems are in themselves secondary. But, although a provincial crisis at the outset, it has become a Canadian crisis, because of the size and strategic importance of Quebec, and because it has inevitably set off a series of chain reactions elsewhere.

What does the crisis spring from? Our inquiry is not far enough advanced to enable us to establish exactly its underlying causes and its extent.

All we can do is describe it as we see it now: it would appear from what is happening that the state of affairs established in 1867, and never since seriously challenged, is now for the first time being rejected by the French Canadians of Quebec.

Who is right and who is wrong? We do not even ask ourselves that question; we simply record the existence of a crisis which we believe to be very serious.

Remember, this is in 1965:

If it should persist and gather momentum it could destroy Canada. On the other hand, if it is overcome, it will have contributed to the rebirth of a richer and more dynamic Canada. But this will be possible only if we face the reality of the crisis and grapple with it in time.

Honourable senators, if, as I believe, that analysis still fundamentally holds true, and if I have correctly interpreted the many expressions of analysis and feelings on this subject in recent years, it is fair to say that the nature of the present crisis essentially concerns provincial rights and minority rights—what Mr. Laurendeau called the two aspects of the Canadian equation.

With respect to minority rights there is institutional bilingualism, where the minority meets the majority in shared institutions, and, secondly, provincial rights—Quebec's place in Confederation—and, thirdly, if I may update Mr. Laurendeau, something we have found in recent years, regional alienation, east, west and north.

With reference to the question of minority rights and bilingualism at the interface—equal rights in shared institutions—I think we can say with some safety that the news is good news. The reforms set in place are on the rails. The storms have been weathered. The Official Languages Act has been passed, supported by all parties. There have been seven years of administration by the Commissioner of Official Languages, and, according to his figures, 80 per cent is good and 20 per cent bad, and that 20 per cent curable. The bad news with reference to minority rights is perhaps outside the federal sphere. Certainly, in Ontario, in New Brunswick and in Manitoba progress has been, I think, unacceptably slow. I refer you, honourable senators, for the details of this unacceptably slow progress to a recent report by La Fédération des francophones hors du Québec, "Les héritiers de Lord Durham."

The second part of the equation is provincial rights; Quebec's place in Confederation. Here, too, as we have discussed in dealing with the inquiry of the Leader of the Government, we realize that the news is not good. I am not here to draw up any bill of indictment, but the feeling or place of Quebec in Confederation, certainly so far as Quebec is concerned, is not, as we speak tonight, felt to be secure. As far as regional alienation outside of Quebec is concerned, we have all had on our desks this week eloquent expressions of the price we pay for our continental geography. I am referring to the reports of Mr. Justice Berger and Mr. Justice Hall.

Having found, or having sought to persuade you, honourable senators, that the basic nature of the present crisis deals with minority rights and provincial rights, how does the constitutional mission of the Senate match the demands of that crisis? Honourable senators, as one of the newest of the new boys in this chamber I ask your indulgence to what you might think the presumption to pedantry or an attempt to lecture fellow Canadians who, as senators, have vaster experience and knowledge, both as Canadians and as senators, than have I. I assure you I have no intention to preach, only to share with you my feelings that Canada's present crisis calls us all forth, and that Canadians have a right to expect service beyond the call of duty from all of their institutions, and that the Senate can be in the vanguard of any reforms necessary to safeguard and protect the essentials of our precious constitutional heritage.