

Public Bills

seems fitting, Mr. speaker, that a bill similar to C-8 should be introduced annually at or near the birthdate of this Father of Confederation. In this way at least once each year the House of Commons could honour Sir John A. Macdonald, and members would have the opportunity of commenting on the man, his ideas and his significant accomplishments. The federal Parliament ought regularly in some way to pay homage to this outstanding Scotsman who saw so clearly that the scattered and divided colonies of British North America had no future apart from one another. He dreamed and worked for a united Canada, a future nation with a dual society. Progress toward Macdonald's goal was slow and tortuous, but it was this cause which gave meaning to his life and guaranteed him a privileged position of prominence in our history. He once said in the period before 1867:

—for twenty long years I have been dragging myself through the dreary waste of colonial politics. I thought there was no end, nothing worthy of ambition; but now I see something which is well worthy of all I have suffered in the cause of my little country. The question of "Colonial Union" . . . absorbs every idea as far as I am concerned.

Many members of Parliament may well envy this politician and statesman who found a genuine cause into which he could pour all his energies. The Dominion of Canada, as it was then called, was proclaimed here in Ottawa on July 1, 1867, amid cannon salutes, bonfires and orations. The new dominion included only four provinces and the boy from Kingston who had become its first prime minister knew that his nation was as yet only a structure of paper documents. Today it is much, much more than that. A man's dream and his ambition, a necessity for survival and an act of the British Parliament have together become an economic and political reality made possible by the work and sacrifice of a diverse people occupying a land with an equally diverse geography. The dry bones of history acquired sinews and muscle; life and spirit were breathed into this body politic and a new nation was created.

The story of Canada clearly reveals that we have had our times of trouble. We have experienced periods of despair and we have had our bouts of illness. Even now, the surgeon is seeking to eradicate a tumorous growth which threatens our health and perhaps even our very existence. The threat of terror and violence could lead to this nation's destruction. Sir John A. in 1865 was deeply distressed by the forces which were at work to destroy the legislative union of 1841. In the parliamentary debates of 1865, speaking on the subject of Confederation, he uttered some words which would have been most appropriate to the current crisis in Canada. He said:

This condition of things was well calculated to arouse the earnest consideration of every lover of his country, and I am happy to say it has had that effect. None were more impressed by this momentous state of affairs, and the grave apprehensions that existed of a state of anarchy destroying our credit, destroying our prosperity, destroying our progress, than were the members of this present House; and the leading statesmen on both sides seemed to have come to the common conclusion that some step must be taken to relieve the country from the deadlock and impending anarchy that hung over us.

For many, the concept of Confederation was strong medicine to cope with the crisis. Even so, for us, the

[Mr. Penner.]

measures taken to deal with terrorism have been direct and forceful. I am reminded, however, of what Albert Camus, the French novelist once wrote:

—our world has no need of lukewarm spirits. It needs ardent hearts that can place moderation in its proper perspective.

Mr. Speaker, I can readily support the principle of this bill which is to honour one of the most important architects of our federation, but I do have some reservations about declaring a national holiday for this purpose. We are fighting inflation, and another day off would decrease our productive capacity and increase costs thereby contributing to this economic malaise. Another long week end would result in additional deaths and injuries on our highways. Students would be deprived of another day in their education at a time when educators are concerned with the knowledge explosion, and at a time when legislators and the taxpayers they represent are seriously questioning both the degree of efficiency and the rising expenditures of our schools, colleges and universities.

Sir John A. worked to build a nation and that task is far from complete. It is sometimes said that today's youth lack a purpose; that they are bored with life and disillusioned with society, so many seek escape in chemical dreams which all too frequently turn out to be nightmares. If anyone needs a challenge, let him turn his eyes northward. In the region of Canada which I represent, and even further north, there is a tremendous need for trained and dedicated people with a wide variety of skills which can be used to develop our resources, to serve the needs of people and their communities, and to help in protecting and restoring the national environment. Many people coming to Canada from abroad have responded to the needs of the north, but for many of our own young people the call has either not been heard or else has gone unheeded.

• (5:20 p.m.)

Nation building is for the bold and for the committed, and in this regard Sir John A. Macdonald has a meaning and message suitable for our day and vital for our future.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I should like to take only a few minutes to indicate my support of Bill C-8, as introduced once again this year by the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie). In his various speeches on this bill he has made it clear that it is important for us to be aware of our history and to keep its memory alive. I think that the suggestion he has made is one that should be implemented. I was glad to hear the hon. member for Thunder Bay (Mr. Penner) say that he agreed with the principle of this bill. I was sorry, however, to hear him suggest that we should confine ourselves to an annual one hour in Parliament talking about Sir John A. Macdonald. We all smiled at some of the arguments he put up as to why we should not have a holiday. May I suggest to him that thanks to the foresight of Sir John A. Macdonald, he was born in the early part of January, so we could arrange, certainly in the parts of the country from which the hon. member for Thunder Bay and I come, for a blizzard to take place