

Canadians with roots in Atlantic Canada, are a strong-willed people, fuelled by a quiet pride in their cultural heritage and regional distinctiveness. We cherish a unique heritage upon which our province has been built. It is a three-fold heritage. There is the Acadian heritage, the loyalist heritage, and the Irish heritage. From these backgrounds our province derives a flavour which we cherish and defend, and it is in the defence of this provincial identity that we have consistently rejected a wider maritime union. It is also the reason we embrace Confederation, for we are confident that this Confederation with nine other provinces guarantees our right to be different and singular; it guarantees our distinct regional identity.

Second, it means a firm commitment to social reform. Throughout Confederation, Canada has built a concern for the needs and well-being of all its people and has grown strong on the basis of four commitments from the federal government, commitments which are shared by every provincial government in this country, or, at least, by every provincial government save one. They are: to do everything possible to avoid another great depression; to establish a system of social security and other support programs which will minimize the privations of family rearing, of old age, of unemployment, of sickness, and of crop failure; to create a society of greater opportunity culturally, linguistically, economically, and educationally; and to strengthen the federation of Canada and the economy of each region by a fair distribution of the wealth of our country in order that all our people will be able to maintain a basic standard of living—the standard to which they have become accustomed through good fortune, good government, and good personal and collective effort.

Confederation is based on a willingness to share a political process of cooling and reconciliation, of working out regional differences through sensible compromise rather than through senseless confrontation and violence.

What would separation by the province of Quebec mean to us, Mr. Speaker? It would mean the loss of the idea of the rich provinces helping the poor. It would create a new era of provincial selfishness and isolation. It would mean the loss of a large number of regional-development-minded members of parliament from Quebec, and thus a weaker voice for economic development in the less wealthy areas of our country. In addition we would lose our relatively easy and inexpensive access to central Canadian markets with a resulting rise in the cost of our food, clothing, and manufactured goods. Restricted accessibility to central Canadian markets would also hinder the sale of our processed foods and of our pulp and paper exports.

● (1830)

Another result is that subsidies for imported oil would probably be discontinued, resulting in increased annual energy costs of approximately \$450 for every man, woman and child in the Atlantic region. This would result not only in higher fuel bills for home heating and travel but, even worse, a much slower rate of industrial development where such development is most urgently needed. Coupled with the loss of federal aid, even in part, the result would be a severe economic crisis. In

National Unity

such a crisis we would probably be forced into a union with all the Atlantic provinces, or into becoming part of the state of Maine. Our provincial heritage and identity would thus be subject to the melting pot of maritime union or of American homogeneity.

So how should we look upon Quebec, Mr. Speaker? Separatist tendencies are not a new phenomenon, nor are they restricted to Quebec. Indeed, in New Brunswick our legislature was clamouring for separation from Canada even before the ink had dried on the British North America Act. Separatist tendencies do rear their ugly heads in various regions throughout Canada but are held in check by the belief of each region that its existence and identity are secure.

This sense of security does not exist to the same extent in the province of Quebec. As a predominantly rural society, Quebec probably could remain isolated and develop independently; but with the change to an industrialized society which began after the war and became greatly accelerated during the sixties, Quebec has been forced to defend its identity against the larger North American English society which dominates business and industry.

Thus, Quebec needs new guarantees for the continued existence of its Quebecois culture. Support for Confederation by Quebecers must be based on the ability of the federal government and the Canadian people adequately to guarantee their continuation. We need, on the one hand, a constitutional revision and, on the other, a new tolerance by all Canadians. We must show the people of Quebec that we will guarantee their identity, and we must give them concrete proof by our actions. If we cannot convince them of our sincerity they will be forced into the arms of the racism now being advocated by René Lévesque.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to turn my attention for a moment to the Acadians. Aside from the indigenous people of Canada, probably no other single group of Canadians has made such a valiant effort to preserve and protect their linguistic and cultural heritage. The fact that the Acadians were able to survive, to reconstruct their lives and to maintain a distinct way of life following the expulsion and dispersion in 1755, is indeed a great tribute to the tenacity and devotion of these people.

It is only in the last generation that a real effort is being made to bring the Acadians into the mainstream of New Brunswick life. The greatest impetus to that drive came from that great Acadian premier of New Brunswick, Senator Louis J. Robichaud. But the separation of Quebec would be very detrimental to Acadians. It would mean the removal of the largest group with the greatest possible interest in bilingualism and the development and enhancement of French Canadian culture. Without the Quebec bulwark, these values would fade. As Bill 1 has made plain, an independent Quebec would offer no such protection to minorities and none to Acadians. Even joining Quebec would mean the loss of the Acadian identity.

There are those, of course, who would advocate a separate Acadian state. Such a state is simply not economically viable.