

*The Address—Mr. Trudeau*

but the people of Canada, and certainly the Leader of the Opposition, were not aware of that. All this, I believe, gives us grounds for hope, Mr. Speaker, that we will at last be able to resolve those problems in a spirit of courage, initiative and sacrifice.

Western Canada has problems which are not parallel, or identical, but are problems nevertheless. It was practically in a state of wilderness at the beginning of Confederation. Now it is one of the fastest developing areas in the world, one of the most confident in its future, and yet its people are frustrated. Why? Because in that part of our country they feel they are not given enough opportunity to participate in setting up a national policy. They feel they are too remote from the central government in Ottawa, and left out of the centre of decisions which were traditionally made in Upper and Lower Canada. The government addressed itself to these problems in the "Western Economic Opportunities Conference" in 1973 but as recently as this summer, the four western premiers met in Brandon and published a document entitled "Task Force on Constitutional Trends," which indicated that, in their views also, the problem was a constitutional one.

There are the economic problems, but in the provinces, even in the very prosperous ones such as Alberta, there is concern about constitutional matters, thought is given to the constitutional set up. In other words, Mr. Speaker, when the government addresses those problems, despite the fact that the Leader of the Opposition chides us for being too concerned about the problem of unity and not enough about the economy, well, we are only doing what the provincial premiers do, who feel that the two are of equal importance, who feel that the constitution, and the problem of unity are in a sense as important as the economic problem. One cannot be solved without the other, one depends on the other, and the solution of one depends on the solution of the other.

That is how we see the problem, Mr. Speaker, namely that of Quebec: and in dealing with it, we naturally also talk of the constitutional situation. We did not invent that: the Quebec government, the Péquiste government itself has put to us the fundamental question of national unity. We would be playing ostrich if we claimed that it did not behoove us to deal with it because the economy is too important, because we have to deal first of all with the economic problems. So, Mr. Speaker, in that matter as in all others, we are willing to tackle the problem.

To make my statement clearer, I will consider the province of Quebec and the problem it raises under two aspects: On the one hand, the province of Quebec is unlike the others. Obviously, because of its language and culture, it differs very deeply from the other provinces with a majority of English speaking population but, on the other hand, it is also a province like the others in that all provincial governments are trying to bring about constitutional changes which would give them more control over their own destinies. Of course, all governments think they would be better equipped to deal with their problems if they had more money and a wider jurisdiction.

[Mr. Trudeau.]

This is not only true of provincial authorities, but also of our own government.

As I said Mr. Speaker, I would like to consider this problem under those two aspects. First, the general one which is common to all federal systems, I mean the tension between the provinces, and it is through this creative tension that both levels of government are often faced with problems.

If, for instance, we look at Quebec's demands for an extended jurisdiction in the field of communications, what do we see? We see that Saskatchewan, Manitoba as well as other provinces would like to have more powers in that particular field. The same goes for immigration. Quebec would like a broader jurisdiction in that area. Some say that Alberta has the same concern and also wants to have some kind of control on its immigration. Quebec would like more powers in the field of social security, namely through more percentage points. So does Ontario.

It is in this sense, Mr. Speaker, that when people talk about a special status they are only fooling themselves. We know that if a province, Quebec for instance, obtained more constitutional powers, the other provinces would like to have approximately the same powers. As a proof, when I made a proposal to all the provincial premiers early last September, people were up in arms because they felt I was offering a special status to Quebec and they said: But the same thing has to be offered to everyone.

That was a misunderstanding, naturally, because I was not offering a special status to anyone. I was using a formula that has been in existence for several years, the "opting-in", but in any case, Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that a special status is absolutely unrealistic in a sense that if we stretch that notion, each province, if it wants an absolute control over its own development, be it industrial or economical for instance, should have jurisdiction on monetary, fiscal, tariff and even foreign policies. This is obviously impossible in a united country. It is obviously impossible to give the provinces all the jurisdictions they might need either directly or indirectly in order to follow a given political destiny, a given economical path. So, how was this problem solved in Canada, this problem of existing centrifugal forces on the one hand, and of centripetal needs on the other, if you will allow me the expression, which will allow a country to act in a united manner?

The traditional answer in this country has been that all the parties have sought to get representatives elected from all across Canada. Traditionally, the cabinet formed by the central government has tried to include representatives from all the regions. Traditionally, the members of the federal parliament have done their best to be acknowledged by their respective voters as their representatives, as first-class representatives not second rate. All the elected members have tried to see to it that the federal government would appear in each of their ridings as the "important government".

Those are so many traditional ways by which the central government has tried in the past to match those centrifugal forces. This has also been done through federal-provincial conferences, through those very numerous federal-provincial