

*National Unity*

to set the tone and should give leadership. I say that it is not just the government's fault, because some individuals and groups outside the government and outside the Liberal party have pushed concepts of this country which are clearly divisive.

The right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) has expressed concern about the rise of provincialism. Certainly excessive provincialism is divisive, but there are concepts and goals which transcend provincial or regional lines and which are even more dangerous to Canadian unity because they are divisive, even if they are put forward in the name of national unity. Thus, our present crisis is not just the fault of our present government.

This government has too often engaged in confrontation and polarization, rather than reconciliation. We saw these tactics employed to set the east against the west back in 1973 and 1974 in connection with oil, for the purpose of trying to secure votes in an election, leaving wounds in the west that will be many years in healing. The present emergency relates to the province of Quebec. Admittedly one cannot reconcile to federalism those who are fully committed to separatism; but did this government have to polarize opinion in Quebec between federalism and separatism? You either accepted the Trudeau concept of federalism or you were stigmatized.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Stanfield:** This federal government made no effort to reconcile Quebec nationalists who were federalists but were also concerned by the heavy hand of Ottawa in areas they consider vital to the future of their province—language and culture. Whether or not this hard line was maintained by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and his colleagues, this was maintained tragically through an underestimate of the strength of Quebec nationalism. It was not very long ago that the Prime Minister said separatism in the province of Quebec was dead. Whether or not this was a result of a tragic mistake in judgment is speculation. What is beyond speculation is that the Trudeau government helped to polarize opinion in the province of Quebec.

I am very unhappy that the Prime Minister chose to risk the future of our country on a shoot-out between himself and René Lévesque. In all honesty and fairness I have to say that Mike Pearson would never have done it. The lesson in this for the future is not that we should now try to conciliate Mr. Lévesque or members of his government—dedicated separatists—but that we should create confidence in the minds and hearts of Quebecers who are not separatists but yet do not buy the Trudeau orthodoxy.

The ministers of the government are reported to be urging an early election on the basis that this would settle things down. My attitude toward the next election is a little different from theirs. I will not be running again. My professional interests will not be involved. A federal election will prove nothing as far as the future of Quebec is concerned. Because of traditions in that province, the Liberals will probably win a substantial majority of the seats. This will in no way indicate that Premier Lévesque could not win a substantial majority for

the provincial government when the chooses to go to the people. We could conceivably go on for some time with federal Liberals and the Parti Québécois each doing well in the province of Quebec, with our country churning in a continuous turmoil. Perhaps the government and its supporters are happy with such a prospect. Obviously they are happy with the way things are going. One can observe this daily in this Chamber. Politically they were in a bad situation before the election of the Lévesque government. If the Lévesque government had not been elected, this government would have to invent it. They have tried to wring every last ounce of political benefit from crisis, and apparently will continue to do so while pretending not to.

● (1730)

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Stanfield:** But our problems of unity, the future of this nation, surely are, or should be, beyond partisan rivalry. The future of our country is at stake. The country was created by co-operation between politicians who had been bitter opponents but recognized that only through co-operation and joint effort could everything be prevented from going down the drain.

One of the alarming aspects of the present danger is that the government sees this crisis as a political benefactor. The Prime Minister has not even called in the provincial premiers; he has not even consulted or invited other federal party leaders for private discussions. No doubt his supporters will point to the Pepin-Robarts commission as a non-partisan response to this crisis. I do not object to that commission, indeed I wish it well, but our problems will be solved, if they are solved at all, as the Prime Minister himself has said, by the elected representatives of the people. The commission may be helpful, but it is far short of an indication that the Government of Canada is putting the interests of the country ahead of its own partisan electoral interests.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Stanfield:** There is one area in which we have had bi-partisanship or, more accurately, multi-partisanship, that is, bilingualism. We have had multi-partisanship toward institutional bilingualism not because the government sought it but because the leadership in the opposition parties supported institutional bilingualism. I supported it because I considered it to be in the national interest, as well, frankly, as in the long term interests of my own party, but it was and is an unpopular policy in a large portion of this country, in the west, through much of Ontario and through much of the Atlantic provinces. In my own province of Nova Scotia public opinion was heavily opposed to that policy as it was perceived by the people.

Those of us who supported and continue to support bilingualism do not expect any medals, but it was not easy for many members of my party to vote for a measure that their constituents thoroughly disapproved of as they perceived it. It was particularly difficult for members from the west, for reasons that the hon. member for Lisgar (Mr. Murta) indicated very