

*The Address—Mr. Diefenbaker*

This is a matter that could be placed before a committee of the house to go into the problem in detail at this session and thereby assure that this question, which is assuming proportions far and above anything that could have been contemplated a few years ago, will receive attention.

Mention was made in the speech from the throne of some action for Indians and Eskimos. I suggest that the government might set up a department of native affairs having as its deputy head a native Indian of Canada or an Eskimo, and that senior positions on a representative basis be filled by natives wherever possible. These are just a few of the matters that have been left out.

Now I come to a major matter, the question of education. Education falls exclusively within the jurisdiction of the provinces and it must so remain. But surely we are not going to leave Canada in a position behind the other countries of the world in the tremendous impetus that is being given to education. When we were in office, as a result of the efforts of the hon. member for Ontario (Mr. Starr) and my colleagues we were able to bring about a system acceptable to the provinces in the setting up of technical and vocational schools. That is ending now; this government does not want it to survive.

We must face immediately the need of a massive educational assistance plan for both universities and secondary schools. Somebody will say this will cost money. I will not be asking for the expenditure of moneys in respect of matters that are not of vital importance to the nation. What happens in the cities and towns today? The man who owns his home is the one who is paying a major portion of the taxes for education. Too great a load rests there. I would like to see a committee of the house study fully the whole problem of education and then in co-operation with the provinces we would nationally provide assistance while fully respecting and regarding the jurisdiction of the provinces.

● (4:20 p.m.)

I mentioned earlier that we wanted to convene a national confederation constitutional conference. We have tried to get this government to act on it. We have been put off from month to month and from year to year. The constitution is being eroded by private deals. The culmination of this—the fruit of the family tree planted by the Liberal party in the last few years—was the declaration, acceptable to both parties in the legislature of

Quebec, on the subject of international relations and the making of treaties. Where are we going? Are we going to be a series of Canadian satrapies with each province entering into international agreements? They may be the popular thing to support but, sir, popularity comes second to the future of this country. Canadian unity cannot be preserved if we continue to chisel away the principles that made confederation possible and which are still the law and constitution of this country.

We suggest that a conference should be convened at once to be attended by federal and provincial representatives as well as representatives of all the political parties. I would like to see representation from all classes and groups in our society, including labour, industry, business, agriculture and so on. This would not be a conference for a day or two but a conference of Canadians for Canada's future.

There is a spirit today in this nation that I have never seen before. There is a willingness to co-operate. I have noticed the change in the years I have been here.

I have noticed a tremendous change in the thinking of Canadians in all the provinces. There is a willingness to try to bring about a rapport that has not existed for many years. When I came first to parliament when anybody spoke French everybody else left because they did not understand it. It was slightly different when somebody spoke English but those who were English speaking often left also. A few years ago, we made this House of Commons bilingual as the constitution provides. It is very interesting today to watch questions being asked in English and answered in French and vice-versa. When we made this house bilingual it was not popular but it is now. There is an attitude among people in all the provinces that if they could only get together and understand what each one wants there might be not too great difficulty in arriving at arrangements acceptable to all. What better year than the hundredth year of our confederation to sit down at a conference methodically and purposefully, without heat, bias or prejudice. We do not want to limit the conference to a few days. It took weeks and months in 1864 and 1866. Such a conference would bring about a fair and reasonable assessment of what changes are necessary and practical. All those present, if I mistake not the feeling of the Canadian people, would be activated by a single aim and