

*The Address—Mr. Pearson*

The absence of a strong opposition means a one party state. A one party state means an all-powerful cabinet.

Those were very wise words uttered by the Prime Minister some years ago when he was in opposition. Well then, Mr. Speaker, it is our duty in parliament to oppose, and that will mean causing divisions of this house on occasions. We do not forget that we are united in a sincere desire to serve our country and that the influences that draw us together in that ideal of national service are much stronger than the influences that separate us into political parties. So far as the quantitative as contrasted with the constitutional position of the opposition is concerned, perhaps I might describe it in the words of Shakespeare which are so well known and which he put into the mouth of Henry V on the eve of Agincourt:

“We few, we happy few, we band of brothers.

I admit at once, Mr. Speaker, that the analogy in regard to the circumstances in which the words were uttered is not quite perfect. Henry spoke of his gallant band before a surprisingly decisive victory, while I speak of ours after a defeat of a surprisingly decisive character. This defeat, I might add, had some of the force of a nuclear explosion, the fall-out from which is not yet entirely dissipated, but nevertheless left the Liberal party with approximately 2.5 million supporters in this country.

It will be our purpose, therefore, to act here so as to add to that number whenever the opportunity presents itself. At the moment, however, I admit that we are outnumbered. Indeed, we are almost surrounded. The Conservative party, Mr. Speaker, has been long in achieving this position of unprecedented numbers which it now holds in the house. Yet I must confess that during the long, lean years they never lost their courage, their heart or their energy. Apart from the Prime Minister himself, to whose electoral activity and achievements I pay a sincere if somewhat rueful tribute, there is no one, I think, who would get and be entitled to more satisfaction out of the present situation of his party than the man who led that party with such patriotic zeal, determination, and sincere conviction during many years of opposition. I refer, of course, to the present Canadian high commissioner to the United Kingdom, my good friend Mr. George Drew.

Many of my own party colleagues, Mr. Speaker, of previous parliaments have not returned. They have fallen by the electoral wayside. We on this side shall certainly miss them. They gave good and devoted service to Canada over many years, as indeed did the members of other opposition groups who are not with us today.

Perhaps I might make special mention of the one whose place in this house, as leader of the Liberal party, I have the honour and responsibility to try to fill, Right Hon. Louis St. Laurent. We admire and respect him, and always will, as one of our great citizens; one whose contribution to the welfare of his country, made with modesty, sincerity and selflessness, has been truly magnificent. I think of the sacrifice he made in entering public life in the first place as a wartime duty, and of what he did to assist and unify the war effort in those days. I think of his leadership in facing and helping to solve so many post-war problems and in helping to guide Canada into and through the greatest period of national development in her history. I think of the wise direction he gave to Canada's participation in international affairs. In that participation he was always, and with quiet determination, guided only by Canadian considerations. But he never forgot that the greatest Canadian consideration is peace and good relations between people, so he never allowed the proud and strong Canadianism to become a strident little Canadianism. His place in our affection is as secure as it will be in Canada's history.

After these preliminary observations which perhaps have been too long, Mr. Speaker, I come to the speech from the throne itself, which was to me most inadequate perhaps for its omissions and the vagueness of so much of its language. Its inadequacies of commission and its sins of omission will be dealt with in detail by my colleagues in the opposition during this debate. My own remarks concerning it will be of a more general character. To read the speech, Mr. Speaker, you would never get the impression that this country is in any economic difficulty at all, with more than half a million men out of work. The word “recession” is not mentioned. It is a bad word, apparently, which must not be used. The causes, the nature and the extent of the unemployment problem are not referred to. Indeed in the address there is very little indication of the present position of our external trade. There is no mention even of that policy of diverting trade from the United States to the United Kingdom, an omission which I hope to repair in this speech of mine. Surely the trade mission of which we have heard so very much outside this house was worth at least a word. Was not the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Churchill) given an opportunity to make a contribution to the first draft of the speech from the throne?

Then there is the dominion-provincial conference which was to be reconvened, as we heard last November, I think it was, as soon as possible. I believe the impression was given