

with linguistic and cultural implications. Canada is therefore a country increasingly difficult to rule.

It is extremely easy, Mr. Speaker, to hurl one part of the country against another. People with the slightest bit of knowledge, in the government or in the opposition, can launch the people from one region against those of another. It has been done with regard to French-English relations. It can be done between the Western and the central provinces or between East and West. It can be done, as it has been said before, between British Columbia and the rest of the country with the best of reasons. Anyone may, on the spur of the moment, raise a serious grievance against the whole of the country.

Yesterday, I heard a member from British Columbia refer to some kind of potential separatism in British Columbia. It is quite possible, because if some day we all behave in such a way that British Columbia will feel completely isolated, there is no doubt that such a movement will emerge. I did not say that there would be—

An hon. Member: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I apologize to the minister.

[*English*]

Mr. McKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I must object to any such interpretation being placed upon the words I used yesterday.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. McKinnon: I stated quite clearly that British Columbia has not, to my knowledge, a single separatist. I was trying to make that clear yesterday.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): Mr. Speaker, there may be some interpretation problems, but I am not responsible for them. I did not say that there were separatists in British Columbia but that these people had problems and that if we did not recognize them, some day they would react just like citizens from another area, the Maritimes, for instance.

I heard it myself from Nova Scotians at the time I was a member of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism; I have just read that some people in Prince Edward Island are thinking of separation. Obviously I am not saying that they are prepared to separate nor that they will. However it must be admitted that the Canadians we represent are particularly sensitive about relations between their region and the rest of the country.

So, if that type of prejudice is to be exploited, one need only say that without a doubt that eastern Canada is poorer than central Canada. It must therefore be expected that the representatives of eastern Canada demand energetically that historical and permanent injustices be remedied. There is nothing abnormal in that; provided it is done without stirring one area against the rest of the country, I believe that is normal.

In Ontario, for instance, some people say: We pay most of the bill. Some of us out west or in the east could stir the citizens against Ontario. That province does not give only. The department I headed distributed considerable money

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to certain regions; that of Industry, Trade and Commerce gave a lot of money to the province of Ontario. I will never go to the trouble of adding it up because the day we start thinking of our country merely in terms of accounting with regard to the various areas, that day it will be threatened with disintegration.

We are together, Mr. Speaker, because we believe we can all benefit from the situation, even if we have reasons to complain, even if there are frictions. We believe it is preferable to be together rather than separated because it means greater advantages. No nation exists through divine right.

Nations such as ours are the results of historical accidents. Who could explain how Canada that we know is made up of French- and English-speaking communities? It is not because of a universal plan but because historical events have brought us together this way. Why the Flemish and the Walloons in Belgium? It is not because of divine right; it is a result of formation of groups throughout history. Therefore, these people must get along together.

This country is built up the very same way. Every one is aware that regional interests are becoming ever more important. There are certain things that political parties must not do on the national level. The government must not be praised at all times, and what they do must not be misinterpreted. Partisanship must continue to exist and the opposition are bound to criticize the government and prepare to replace it eventually; such is the normal game of politics. If that normal game is held up on the pretence that there are problems in Canada, then democracy is not for us.

So one must be much more careful when taking positions so as to avoid breaking up the country by resting on things that will not be changed.

I have been told, you should not talk about it so nothing will be said. This may be the best way. Because of their temperament or their culture some say when a problem comes up: Sweep it under the rug. This is not my way of doing things. I came to Ottawa a little over seven years ago with some colleagues for the very simple reason that we believed in federalism and we saw in our province a rising movement trying to convince our compatriots that belonging to a country such as Canada not only was not worth it but actually made us poorer, that we were not represented and that we played no part in Ottawa, that we were a French-speaking entity in a large English-speaking world which, of course, continuously steered the country according to its interests. That is what people were saying not in their living rooms but publicly and that is what was being suggested by a political party which enjoys freedom of existence in that province and particularly in the Quebec National Assembly. There is a problem in Quebec that has not necessarily been created by the other provinces, but it is there and we have tried to solve it. Furthermore, we were convinced—and I still am—that several injustices people were complaining about were real.

It would be naïve to think that here in Ottawa, for example, French Canadians enjoy fair play in the civil service. The fault is not necessarily with the English-speaking people, but, frankly, there was no fair play, and if you want statistics, I shall provide them. Let us just