

Premier Lougheed made very clear, namely, that it was essential to development in northern Alberta and to the province's over-all, long-range planning and to diversify its economy, has now been vindicated by the Supreme Court of Canada and is an indication why a flexible federalism is absolutely essential. The provinces do have a right to expand and develop their own regions through a system of transportation along the line Premier Lougheed has indicated.

● (2150)

I think it would be a very serious mistake indeed for the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) to carry out the implied threat that he made prior to the handing down of the Supreme Court decision. He implied he would bring legislation into the House to roll back the decision of the Alberta government to acquire PWA. I warn the Minister of Transport, with all the energy at my command, that we will fight any such legislation down to the last post. We will uphold the right of provinces to develop their own regional strengths, including their own transportation systems.

I think more of us in this country are recognizing that regional input is absolutely essential if we are to have the kind of flexible and creative federalism that is necessary and which Bill C-37 allows us to consider in greater fullness. It is essential to be realistic about the extent of the threat that is facing Canada. However, it is more important not to despair or to accept separatism as inevitable. I want to reaffirm to the House tonight that the people of Alberta by no means are accepting the so-called inevitability of separatism. We are going to indicate in the months ahead, by a mobilization of outspoken federalism in our province, that those who are telling the rest of Canada that Alberta does not care are wrong. As I say, I do not think that separatism is at all inevitable. The idea, the emotion, and the power of a united Canada is shown to be stronger and better than René Lévesque's constricting nationalism.

The alternative to the PQ argument must always be visible. It must be perceived by French-speaking Canadians that they can fulfil themselves culturally in Canada at least as well as they could in a separated Quebec. Certainly a great effort to make the bilingual nature of this country a working reality should not be abandoned. Real progress is being made in the public service and in the schools, and I have given the House an illustration in this regard so far as Edmonton is concerned. Real progress is being made and should be continued.

There are justifiable complaints in western Canada. Indeed, there is a similarity in the expressions of concern and alienation felt within the province of Quebec and those felt in other regions. We heard about Newfoundland tonight. I can tell the House that the people of Alberta also feel a sense of frustration which is caused by an inflexible type of federalism which is maintained by an overly centralist concept administered by the present government. I think we are looking forward to the day when we can have a greater decentralization of powers, and in order to approach this great question we must have the right attitude. In that way we recognize that a compromise is

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going to be necessary to hold our country together, in the same way that compromise was necessary in order to build and establish Confederation in the first place.

I look forward, then, to a national debate centring right here in the House which will be about the ways that a compromise can be achieved with honour and with practicality. I think that reason and toleration will help us to understand that what we are talking about is not so-called "giving in", to Quebec, but of implementing new relationships between Ottawa and the provinces that will lead to a deepened sense of national unity. It is in the interests of Alberta as much as Quebec to search for a new mode of Confederation, one that builds nationhood out of the strengths of all regions, rather than imposing a centralized system from the top.

I do not think that this debate is going to be easy by any means, which is why I think none of us should pretend that we have the final answers at the moment. Rather this is the time for speaking and for listening and for moving together, whether in Newfoundland, British Columbia, Alberta or Quebec. Together we must be tolerant of the views of one region or another at this moment when we are trying to find the way in which our country can be held together.

I want to mention that one thing I am going to do as, I hope, a small contribution in my capacity as a member of parliament, where I think I have some responsibility to exert some leadership in finding solutions to this problem, is to hold a Town Hall meeting in Edmonton on March 28 under the title "The Kind of Canada I Want". I am going to invite the people of Edmonton to come and speak from their hearts of their concern for the kind of Canada they want. I am going to invite the media from the province of Quebec to cover this event, and I hope they will convey to the people of Quebec in a direct manner the feeling of the people of Edmonton that they do care and that they are willing to pay the price for holding our country together.

It is not enough, Mr. Speaker, for members of parliament simply to stand and to say they want the country to stay together. I think we have an obligation to give some leadership and to show how we try to lead the way to these solutions, instead of just waiting for them to appear at some federal-provincial conference. If the Canadian parliament is going to re-assert its claim to leadership in this country in the form it was constituted, I think members of parliament ought to be able to advance some solutions to the crisis that faces us.

Speaking only for myself, I think we find a better concept of a more creative kind of federalism through a consideration of the report that was issued by the Joint Senate and House of Commons Committee on the Constitution, which reported to this House in June of 1972 and which did try to find a way between outright balkanization and a centralism that people in many provinces find excessive. I think if we can express a consensus on decentralization we would have a bold, new and exciting way to restore the vitality of Canada.

I see it is ten o'clock, Mr. Speaker; I will continue at a later time.