

It is not my aspiration to spend my time in public life as a message carrier for Ottawa. I could not have endured the role of a Liberal or NDP Member who had to carry the message during the bitter years when our western oil and gas resources were being arbitrarily expropriated, that it was "in the interests of the whole".

Our Party did not believe it was in the interests of the whole. We believe that we should listen to the local Government, the local people and hear their case. We did not believe the power of the majority should be used to override the strongly-held views of a minority region.

I hope it will never be said of me that I do not listen to the people of Calgary Southeast, just as I dare hope other Members listen to those who sent them. Listening gets a lot of lip service, but you cannot listen if you are not within hailing distance. The place to listen is standing on a constituent's doorstep, sitting down at the constituent's kitchen table or attending town hall meetings or community hall meetings.

The past mistakes of previous Governments are behind us, but when I listen, what I hear is a residue of western uncertainty and anger.

The most important step that this Government has taken to end western alienation has been the conclusion of the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement. For most of the last century western Canadians have demanded release from the shackles of central Canadian tariff policies. More than 100 years ago farmers in Manitoba and the Northwest Territories demanded free trade. They were self-reliant. They believed in the market economy. They wanted unfettered access to United States markets for their goods, and they resented paying high prices for goods manufactured in central Canada. Who could blame them? They had faith in their ability to thrive under free trade conditions. They were the true forebearers of today's westerners who are confident of their ability to compete in global and continental markets, confident of their entrepreneurial talents, confident that they can improve their prosperity and build a better society without government interference and regulation.

We westerners are a self-reliant people. We have been nurtured in the hardships of the pioneer immigrant experience. We have traditionally sought nothing more than equality of opportunity and equality of treatment with other Canadians. In giving us that, this Government has begun to address a century of grievance. The Free Trade Agreement has gone far toward that end.

The Address—Mr. Richardson

The Government must continue to reassure westerners that opportunities for new development will be equal across Canada. The Throne Speech holds out that promise with its commitment to "ensure that the benefits of liberalized trade and economic expansion are shared fairly by all Canadians". The message to westerners is clear. Only by an active and vigorous involvement in the political process can we protect our regional interests while at the same time contribute to the advancement of the nation as a whole.

We westerners have come far since 1984. The total isolation that was our lot under the Liberals has been dramatically reversed, but there is farther yet to go. It will take even more time and even more positive action on the part of this Government to reverse the damage that was done in 16 years of Liberal rule.

More so than any Government in recent memory, it is clear that this Government is genuinely interested in dispelling regional differences. No Conservative Prime Minister will ever ask westerners: "Why should I sell your wheat, your oil, your potash?". This Government, by its actions, has started to bring westerners, Québécois and Atlantic Canadians into the fold to share the bounty of Confederation.

I welcome the Government's continuing commitment to the social programs that have a long time ago made Canada a "kinder, gentler nation."

That spirit of caring is deeply rooted in the western Canadian psyche. Westerners banded together in the face of hardship and for more than 100 years we have led the nation in innovative social and education programs. We believe in social justice, and we practice it. We are also a multicultural society, and have been since waves of immigrants settled the West, most from Europe and the United States, 90 years ago. The more recent arrival of peoples from Asia, the Caribbean and other parts of the world are a continuation of that process, a process that has built and strengthened the West and added to our pool of talent. Westerners are the sons and daughters of immigrants. We believe in multiculturalism, and we practice it.

Westerners applaud the actions that this Government has taken during the last four and one-half years to protect our environment. It is a remarkable record. Canada is a world leader in this area. Next month, the Geneva-based International Environment Bureau will present the Prime Minister, representing all Canadians, with its 1989 Environmental Achievement Award, a most prestigious honour and one in which we can take a great deal of pride.