

*The Address—Mr. Caouette*

Now, Her Majesty's advisers, namely the government, recognize that we must fight against social injustice, because such injustice actually prevails in several areas of our country and not merely in one.

The people in Quebec are heard to say that poverty exists in their province because of the presence of French-speaking Canadians there. In every part of Canada that I have visited, I have seen social injustice among English-speaking Canadians. I have seen poverty-stricken English Canadians in the western provinces. Therefore, the province of Quebec is not the only one justified in complaining.

The second point is cultural mediocrity.

We agree or recognize that our intellectual culture is mediocre in the sense that we do not know exactly whether we have a true and distinctive Canadian culture.

We are wondering rightly whether our culture is not more American than Canadian. Since we are living on the American continent, we may be influenced by the United States from every point of view, cultural, economic and even political. Anyhow, we realize that in Canada we must fight against cultural mediocrity, spiritual stagnation and all forms of intolerance. We have suffered from intolerance for many years.

Mr. Speaker, our country exists in its present form, or nearly so since 1867, and we are now celebrating the centennial of confederation. Some people are happy to celebrate this centennial, others are not. Some criticize the celebration of this centennial, others accept it willingly and most cordially.

When the Fathers of Confederation, Cartier, Macdonald, and the others, in 1867 put on paper the terms which gave or were to give birth to the Canadian confederation, they were looking forward to a promising future for all the provinces then joining the Canadian confederation, as well as for the provinces which would join in the years to come.

Everyone admits that confederation has gone through difficult times. Everybody also admits that confederation has had its weaknesses. It is also admitted that confederation has suffered its fanatics on both sides. We know some of them, particularly in 1967, at a time when we are celebrating the centennial of this confederation.

Mr. Speaker, even with all its defects, confederation has nevertheless enabled the whole country, all the Canadian provinces to

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develop at a pace unknown in almost all the countries of the world.

• (12:40 p.m.)

In fact, we have reached in Canada a standard of living far superior to that of many other countries in Europe, Asia, Africa or elsewhere.

We may have suffered from injustice, but this has not been felt by one isolated group only. It has perhaps been the result of a lack of understanding and contact between the various elements which make up our country, now and in the past. When I was a youngster, I was taught that the English, or English-speaking Canadians, were fanatics, all of them. English Canadians were taught the opposite, the French-speaking Canadians were all fanatics and people with whom it was impossible to come to an understanding.

When people are isolated, each in his corner, and when there are no communication facilities, these things become ingrained in their minds, as they were in our minds some 30, 35 or 40 years ago. However, Mr. Speaker, when we have the opportunity of communicating with Canadians of other origins in other provinces, we realize that there are real and good Canadians everywhere.

For the last five years, in particular, I have had the opportunity of visiting the western provinces and the maritimes, where the majority of the population is English-speaking. For example, I met in the west workers and farmers as well as university people. I had the privilege of going to the University of Toronto, for instance, in our neighbour province. I gave a conference at Trinity Hall, in Toronto, where thousands of students came to hear me. I also had the privilege of speaking to university students in Manitoba, in Regina, Saskatchewan, in Vancouver and Victoria in British Columbia, and also at the University of Alberta, in Edmonton.

Mr. Speaker, everyone knows that I am a French-speaking Canadian and that I fight for the recognition of French Canadians throughout Canada. It is indeed a duty for me to say that I have had a friendly reception in all those provinces; I might even say that I have had a warmer welcome in the western universities than in the University of Montreal, in my own province of Quebec. And these people out west, these young students, these farmers or whoever they are, are most hospitable. We are welcomed like kings in those provinces. Even if these young people do not