

The Address—Mr. Corbin

Canada Act which is mentioned in the Speech from the Throne. That new Official Languages Act will be based on certain recommendations of the royal commission on bilingualism and biculturalism of which the late Mr. André Laurendeau was one of the architects. I never met Mr. Laurendeau but I always read his columns with a great deal of interest. The man is gone but his spirit remains. I am confident that the new legislation on the official languages of Canada will further strengthen our national unity and will bridge the few gaps brought about by repeated attacks against our federative system. It is in that sense that I am especially happy to read in the Speech from the Throne that constitutional reforms remain the best long-term guarantee of Canadian unity and that discussions with the provinces will continue in that direction.

Those statements, Mr. Speaker, were quite warmly welcomed by French-speaking residents in New Brunswick. The contents of the Speech from the Throne are, no doubt, also comforting for all the French Canadians living outside Quebec. It is desirable that English-speaking people living within majority French-speaking groups may also be able to avail themselves of all the benefits provided to them by this new legislation.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Corbin: I represent here the English element of Madawaska-Victoria. Already, I know that my English-speaking constituents approve these projected reforms, which guarantee their own rights as well as those of the French language. It is in this direction that we want to advance in New Brunswick and in Canada. We had to wait a long time for such reforms, but are happy to see that they will finally be seriously submitted to the house.

I have given special attention to the recent statements of the right hon. Prime Minister to the effect that regional economic disparities may threaten national unity, as much as our linguistic and cultural differences.

• (12:40 p.m.)

Those are true words for us in the Maritimes who are looking forward to moving again towards the benefits of a just Canadian society and of a prosperous national economy.

We all noticed in the Speech from the Throne these words emphasizing the necessity of taking fundamental steps toward the

[Mr. Corbin.]

betterment and welfare of the Canadian people, the straightening out of possible deviations, the redeeming of sins of omission and the atoning of past mistakes so as to give every citizen an equal opportunity.

I have not yet had the chance to learn about regional problems throughout Canada, but the presence here of members from every part of the country will give me this opportunity. The fact remains however that the economy of the Atlantic region is greatly in need of help, above and beyond anything that has been done for it so far. We shall not be necessarily satisfied with new programs. It is quite possible that rectifying mistakes might bring about more quickly that just society so greatly desired by Canadians and of which this government gives us the assurance.

There has developed in our riding of Madawaska-Victoria in particular, as well as in other regions of Canada, in the last several years, an attitude which I call one of stretched out hands to the government. That way of life has met with the disapproval of many citizens. I am not discussing here the necessity and the real value of numerous public programs of social welfare in which several levels of government take part but I see to what extent an important sector of the population—not to say whole regions—has become completely dependent on the government.

We are really privileged to live in a country which can afford such programs in the first place. But one knows to what extent abuse and dependence on social welfare programs can lead to a real deterioration of human activity and how such abuse shows scorn for those who earn their daily bread by the sweat of their brow. That is why we must continue to search together for solutions such as, for instance, the retraining of manpower and other similar measures bringing about tangible and lasting results.

To face this problem, a group of well-informed and far-sighted men set up in my riding, hardly three years ago, a regional development council for north-western New Brunswick (CRANO). Farming has been rapidly outdistanced in the last decades by the tremendous improvement of technology and weakened, as everywhere else in Canada, by the ever-increasing problems of marketing, which put small farms out of business.

CRANO is now considering all areas of economic activity in the designated areas and defining a development plan which will have