

said it is the duty of all Canadians to fight with all their ability whenever the head of separatism arises. I do not have to say in this House how hard the Minister of Justice fought separatism in his own province.

I think it is important that hon. members from western Canada in this debate, and in the ensuing months, should to the best of their ability calm down this feeling of western separatism. Surely if we are members of Parliament we are Canadians first and Albertans second. As members of Parliament that is the message we must all give to western Canada regardless of political affiliation.

I would like to deal now with some of the remarks I have heard on open-line shows which have attempted to answer some of these problems vis-à-vis western frustration with respect to our present energy program and our budget, indeed, even with respect to the constitutional debate which is presently in committee.

I went to western Canada in July and participated in open-line shows. People calling in said, "Look, suddenly we find that for the first time in our lives we have all the riches, we are becoming much stronger economically than we have ever been before. All we see is a strong federal government trying to grab the money that we feel is rightly ours." Coming back to this whole issue of fairness in revenue sharing and about being a Canadian I say to them that there has been one consistent oil policy developed as Canadians, regardless of whether it has been under a Liberal or a Conservative government. Since the time of confederation one of the major principles which has allowed this parliament to survive the 113 years has been the ability of the federal government to take the riches from the "have" provinces and distribute them—I am not saying distribute them equally across this country, but distribute them in a manner in which we can, at least, deliver a basic level of service to all Canadians. There should be a basic security system for Canadians in this country; there should be basic rights for all Canadian citizens to enjoy.

**Mr. Siddon:** All you do is keep taking.

**Mr. Frith:** What the member opposite has just said is the kind of remark we seem to be hearing all the time—we always seem to be taking. Clearly, that is not the case. If the member wishes to rise on a point of order I do have at least seven minutes left—

**Mr. Siddon:** I wonder if the hon. member would receive a question on the subject of equalization and sharing?

I appreciate the genuine atmosphere in which the member is speaking. I think the reason for the frustration western Canadians feel is that in the talk about the importance of suppressing our feelings of anxiety we should not at the same time talk about what we view as discrimination or unfairness in the means by which equalization is to be administered. In other words, western Canadians want to know how the sums add up. The government opposite will not share with us what we are giving and who is receiving to what degree. Would the

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hon. member answer this question: does he not think western Canadians are entitled to that information?

**Mr. Frith:** I would like to answer the hon. member's question in this way since it is a question that came up in the Quebec referendum. It came up within the last four years as a result of the threat of separatism in the province of Quebec. When we get into this whole mathematical ballgame of how much we put into confederation and how much we take out the answer is: whoever is cooking the books can give you a different answer.

● (1740)

I was at the Economic Council of Canada two or three years back when the finance minister for Quebec, Jacques Parizeau, gave an address. He had been making quite a few speeches with respect to how much money it was actually costing Quebec to stay within confederation. I remember that the treasurer of Ontario, Mr. Darcy McKeough handed Mr. Parizeau at that time a leather-bound edition of what Ontario's treasurer had come up with as to what confederation cost Ontario.

I want to get away from that and come back to the basic feeling of fairness in the country. I happen to believe, having talked to western Canadians, that once their level of frustration is at least spoken out, they are still Canadians first, and they still believe in the principle of sharing. The reason I am speaking in this vein is that in terms of editorial reporting in western Canada and to a large extent on the national television networks I feel we are not getting our message across. I speak not from the standpoint of a Liberal message. I refer simply to the message that a central government must give to western Canada.

Let me come back to some of the remarks addressed to me on open-line shows in western Canada. I was told that world prices prevail for almost every other commodity and asked why not for oil. Last night in his speech the hon. member for Burin-St. George's (Mr. Simmons) correctly pointed out that in the late sixties copper prices were deliberately kept below the world price by the federal government in order to maintain a viable industry in Canada. In addition, exports were curtailed at that point in order to allow our Canadian industries to survive.

It was pointed out on other occasions that over the years, and particularly in the sixties, Canadians paid more for western oil than the world price. That was a conscious decision made by a central government to stimulate the oil industry in western Canada and to allow it to survive and to grow. This has been done in the past. To an extent I suppose we have done the same with respect to the cost of wheat. In order to maintain a thriving agricultural economy in western Canada, there have been times since confederation when we have paid more than the world price for wheat, and for the same reasons.