

*Taxation*

Of late, some people's legitimate regional concerns have degenerated into forms of provincial patriotism which increasingly violate the need for national justice and equality. For example, some provincial political leaders have emphasized, at the expense of nearly everything else, the urgent need for a strong mandate to protect what they call either a unique heritage or tremendous wealth from what they perceive to be threatening outside forces. Inspired by self-interest and discontent, this kind of attitude can turn the provinces into islands unto themselves, increasingly unconcerned about the legitimate needs and fundamental rights of dissenting Canadians within and beyond their provincial borders.

The crisis today is fuelled in many areas by this rise of narrow provincialism that deepens the rift between the federal government and the provinces. The ideology of confrontation instead of the spirit of co-operation has gained the upper hand, resulting in rigidity instead of flexibility.

The public debate therefore, I suggest, Mr. Speaker, should concentrate on how to secure justice and equality for all Canadians, and not on the power struggle between provincial and federal governments—justice that would allow for principled differences and accommodate regional diversities.

History has shown that for a nation to retain its vitality and maintain its progress, it must foster a continuing dialogue among its citizens. Furthermore, only when this dialogue is communicated to its citizenry can a nation hope to profit, via the democratic mandate, from such discussion and debate.

If we Canadians are not sensitive to the dynamics of our environment, we will forfeit the opportunity to fashion our political and economic future.

What is required, Mr. Speaker, is a clear understanding by Canadians of what our directions and choices should be in a period when the economy is growing slowly or not at all, and the assets from previous rapid economic growth are not available to deal with the problems.

We know there are serious social and economic problems that must be dealt with in our country today. We also know that Liberal governments have presided over the greatest economic expansion this country has seen and also put in place a social security system for individual Canadians which is the envy of many other countries.

With governments seriously constrained to keep, or even reduce, over-all spending, do we abandon our compassion, or do we find ways to meet those social and economic problems with the resources we have available? Can we abandon our commitment to a compassionate social policy in favour of the new fads of conservatism?

After 30 years of achieving historic levels of economic growth, the industrial countries of the world are all sharing substantial slowdowns and suffering similar problems of inflation, high interest rates and unemployment. Is our choice, as a Canadian people, to abandon the system of government incentives and private initiatives on which Canada has grown for a concept of a totally free marketplace which was disproven by the Great Depression? Or is it for a socialist program of

state control of the means of production and the strangulation of the entrepreneurial spirit?

The worst of solutions is to run to one extreme or the other. We should continue to be committed to a mixed enterprises system which has been a strong foundation on which to build our economic strength over the years. Canadians should be neither dominated by the public sector nor the private sector. We should strive for a harmonious balance between private power and public power in our society. This is what sometimes causes political life to be frustrating—trying to achieve that harmonious balance that will satisfy all our needs, not just those of a particular interest group. There are no easy or simple solutions because there are no easy or simple problems.

● (1530)

As we continue this debate on Bill C-93, Mr. Speaker, I am sure there are some Canadians who would like to see all government spending done away with. As a member of Parliament, I have received pleas from some segments of my constituency for this to take place, but I have also received pleas from other segments not to touch the programs which affect them. Let us cut, they say, but do not cut industrial incentives programs which are fundamental to economic recovery. Do not cut transfer payments, which they say will put added burdens on the provinces. Do not cut subsidies to cultural organizations such as theatres, museums, symphony orchestras and the like. Do not cut the social programs. And on it goes.

We hear as well from other segments crying for more government spending to stimulate the economy. We hear that every day from across the aisle. One minute they say spend the money; the next minute they say cut the money. This is where we must strive for that harmonious balance of which I spoke earlier.

We do live in a world filled with fear and anxiety, a world which focuses more and more on individual and group possessions and territory. We are concerned in many ways about the changes taking place around us which we sometimes barely understand. At such times there is a great temptation to go where the strength seems to be, whatever the substance that may be offered, rather than to accept our responsibilities as citizens to try to understand and wrestle with the change in a way which preserves the greatest freedom and well-being for us all.

Our democratic system was born at a time when most people were living in authoritarian societies. The people who settled in our country had had their share of government repression. They were individualists and they structured their new society so as to preserve the rights of the individual. Their assumption was that given freedom and protection of individual rights, a society could depend upon personal initiatives for its economic development. Thus, as the free enterprise system assumed the responsibility for economic growth, a caring philosophy through a free government expressed man's humanity to man, representing the social process of democracy.