

The Address

United States. We need to pursue adjustment policies to corporations and workers that would strengthen Canada's role in a global trading economy.

Mr. Peter L. McCreath (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to participate in this throne speech. I would like to compliment the government on this visionary throne speech which puts forward several ideas that point the direction Canada should be taking as we head toward the 21st century.

I am pleased to see the high profile given to education. Education is the basis for the future, and education is the key that unlocks the door to economic opportunity for all individuals.

I am pleased to see the emphasis on renewing the effectiveness and the responsiveness of the government, and on continuing the excellent innovations that were made toward the end of the last session with respect to how this place operates.

However, the two initiatives that are by far and away the most important include the initiative to respond to what is called the unity crisis in Canada, to look ahead and set in place a process whereby this country can come together and build and strengthen itself and renew confederation as we head to the 21st century. Also, at the same time, there must be the very important recognition that economic prosperity, economic recovery and economic strength are the real keys to unity in this country, bringing together these concepts of political or constitutional unity and economic unity and economic strength. That is the secret to the future of this country. That linkage is very important.

One cannot help but notice in these recent months that increasingly there is a tendency, as we look at this whole issue of national unity in Canada, to see a polarized focus on Quebec on the one hand and on western Canada, particularly Alberta, on the other hand. We see that in those two parties which seem to have very similar goals, the Bloc Quebecois on the one hand and the Reform Party on the other.

I am a member of Parliament from Atlantic Canada. I asked myself as I read this throne speech, as I listened to the debate throughout the nation and read the various

articles in the newspapers and watched television, where is Atlantic Canada in this agenda? Where is Nova Scotia in the context of not only the national agenda generally but the agenda of the government of the day?

As I read the throne speech and look to the direction that we are heading, I ask myself where do we as maritimers, where do we as Nova Scotians, fit in all this?

I think it is important. It is a time for reflection as well as a time for looking back. We cannot ignore our history. Some may choose to abuse our history but it can be instructive. It is important to remind this House and to remind Canadians as they head into this continuing process of national renewal that my province of Nova Scotia did not come willingly into confederation. Indeed, it could be said that we came kicking and screaming into confederation.

It is important to remember that in the first election following Confederation, out of 19 members of Parliament, Nova Scotians elected 18 who were separatists, who were anti-Confederates. It is important to remember that we have not always felt welcome and comfortable within Confederation. It is important to remember that there was a separatist movement in 1886 and 1887 that elected a separatist government in Nova Scotia. It is important to remember the Maritimes Rights Movement of the mid-1920s, a movement that resulted in the establishment of the Duncan commission which reported that Atlantic Canada did indeed have a valid complaint with the way Confederation had operated.

I think it explains, if one looks more closely, the tendency throughout the last 50 years for the maritimes to be represented in this House predominantly from the opposition benches. There is a message in that. Why do maritimers tend to vote for the opposition party? The answer, quite simply, is there is a long-standing feeling, rightly or wrongly, that Atlantic Canada has never been at the centre of the decision-making process. It has never been at the centre or in the forefront of the minds of those who lead our country from the cabinet offices.

In a sense, we do ourselves an injustice if we compare the voting patterns of maritimers with the voting patterns of Quebec. Quebec has tended to vote as a block, tended always to be represented predominantly in the government benches and, consequently, to be represented in very large numbers at the cabinet table.