

*The Address—Mr. Cook*

change overnight. They sit and await a spark, a spark that could grow to a raging fire in the west.

Despite what the press may say—and they have made little of these groups—they do have a large constituency in the west. There is a very real threat now. It is at the talking stage in the living rooms, dining rooms, coffee houses, restaurants, school rooms and business offices of western Canada. It is not yet fully organized. It is not yet articulated. But it exists to a far greater extent than most Canadians realize. Unless this government pays a greater attention to the western point of view, unless this government is prepared to listen to what the west is saying—and it has been notably lax in that over the past ten years—then I sincerely fear for my country.

● (1700)

The dissident westerner remembers that he was beholden to the railways because they controlled his destiny. The dissident westerner forgets that there are now western trucking organizations owned and operated by westerners, supplying excellent alternatives. The dissident westerner thinks about the jungle of freight rates in western Canada and how it often seems to appear totally unfair to the west. He forgets that the grain is still being moved at a price set before 1900. The dissident westerner talks about less than world prices for oil. Albertans, as a matter of fact, have contributed toward Canadian unity something like a \$17 billion subsidy for national unity purposes. The dissident westerner forgets the billion paid by Ontario in eastern Canada when oil pricing was a different thing. He also forgets the tens of billions of dollars paid by Ontario in transfer payments for the benefit of all Canadians.

The list of economic points of bitterness and bickering is a long one. However, when you look at the new west, the western provinces of 1980, you must realize that most of the economic disparities have been solved or are being solved.

Old ideas and old concepts and resentments die hard. The west really has yet to take a very good look at itself and realize the growth, and the fact that the economy of western Canada is not what it was and that Ontario no longer dominates in an economic sense, as it once did.

My findings are that while alienation talk grows stronger in western Canada due to basic misapprehensions as to what the world is like today and not what it was a generation ago, here in Ontario there are also misconceptions and improper views as well as to what is going on.

In Ontario those who are thinking seem to be worried about the west. Ontario, too, has many misconceptions. As an example, the last wooden sidewalk was replaced 40 years ago in western Canada. Ontario does not seem to understand yet that its reliance upon the captive market of western Canada is becoming increasingly less important to the manufacturers of Ontario. What with reductions through GATT and the opening up of more markets by lowering trade barriers, Ontario can compete in the world, and Ontario must compete in the world, and the western Canada market becomes almost unimportant to Ontario.

As an example, the figures for 1974 are rather interesting and typical. Manufacturing shipments from Ontario to western Canada amounted to only 8.9 per cent of all shipments; shipments west from Quebec amounted to only 6.5 per cent; and shipments west to east represented only 4.8 per cent to Ontario and 3.8 per cent to Quebec, and most of them were of food, beverages, and forest products.

There is no danger either for Ontario because of the new skills that are developing in western Canada. There is no danger in terms of manufacturing; we are unimportant to the east and they are unimportant to us. When you talk about the sale of services, whether it be management skills, consulting, engineering or whatever, certainly the west will compete in the eastern market because transportation plays no part. We are talking about brains. Ontario has the skills too, and can certainly compete on an even basis with the new youthful service skills of western Canada. They certainly will be competing in the same fields of computer science, research, intellectual pursuits, microinstrumentation, automation, and all of those things.

Ontario can welcome a new partner. Ontario can welcome a new competitive source which will put it on its mettle, in the same way as westerners can welcome eastern expertise and use that expertise to develop other skills in western Canada. The point I am making here is that what will happen, as the western economy becomes even more similar to the eastern economy in terms of structure, aspirations and economic relationships, is that east and west will grow closer together for mutual benefit, in the same way as France and Germany grew closer together when the common market was set up.

The problems of western alienation will not be economic, because more and more people realize that the region has grown up and can stand on its own two feet. However, there is another side, and that is the political side. Here I have fear that we may not be able to solve the problems quite as easily. I can do no better than quote the words of Stan Roberts, the president of the Canada West Foundation, who, after a series of workshops held across western Canada a year or so ago, said:

There is an urgently growing need for the goals and aspirations of western and northern Canadians to be recognized, supported and fulfilled. There is a serious challenge to confederation, not only in Quebec. The current structure of Canadian confederation has demonstrated a potentially fatal weakness; the inability to meet the development needs of its members. Years ago the Canadian family stuck together because it had to do so. In the coming years, only a meaningful structure and attitudinal change will hold it together.

It is difficult for eastern Canadians to understand and know the west and westerners. Westerners generally feel that only a small proportion of policy makers and implementers in Ottawa know the west. At these meetings I talked about, the concern was expressed that the majority in the public service in Ottawa, especially at the policy level, not only do not understand the west but inherently feel that there is nothing to know; that the west is simply an underdeveloped westward extension of Ontario that was satisfied in its colonial state until recently when it found a measure of prosperity.