

*Anti-Inflation Act*

a country, he said: "I understand Quebec, I am Francophone"—although I think he is half Scottish by origin. I can understand why he wants to evade the economic issues which will plague him during the next campaign. We can understand why he wants to go ahead on the national unity issue if we remember that when he was elected ten years ago there was not one separatist sitting in the Quebec National Assembly. Today there are approximately 70 or 71 and they are in power.

I am not blaming the Prime Minister entirely for what happened in Quebec, but as a Francophone Prime Minister of the country surely he must have known what was going on in Quebec in the 1960s and 1970s. So why did he choose to ignore the natural linguistic and cultural aspirations of that province and instead try to superimpose upon English speaking Canada some quasi-linguistic program that would somehow solve our problems by converting Canada into a bilingual nation? If we were the size of Switzerland, I would understand it.

Now he wants to get away from the AIB and all the problems and troubles that the AIB has caused Canadians. He wants to ignore inflation and the ravages that unemployment creates within a family, a neighbourhood or a community, and somehow sell the idea of national unity, about which we have all thought very seriously over the years. What is new about it? It is very interesting, when you compare the economy with national unity—and incidentally this ties in with this bill—to note that the government had flattened out in the late summer and early autumn of 1976 so far as their popularity across the country was concerned. They did not know where to go, they had no ideas and no philosophy left, if they ever had any in the beginning. Then all of a sudden, in the middle of November 1976, René Lévesque was elected premier of Quebec and the separatists gave our Prime Minister an issue.

We are not looking for issues in this country today, we are looking for policies which will benefit all Canadians, whether French speaking or English speaking. This is what will cement this country. But if unemployment continues to increase in Quebec, if job opportunities falter and fail for the young in Quebec, the young people in Quebec will say: "Look, we have our language and we have our cultural traditions. What is the point of staying in confederation?"

You do not hold a country together with rhetoric. In all sincerity and honesty I am somewhat dismayed that the Prime Minister is now quoting from the Bible and asking people to love one another. You do not need to quote from the Bible; you have to work, you have to act. You have to bring in economic policies that will help Canadians recapture their sense of self-confidence and dignity as people in this country. What we need are not words and pronouncements from on high, not somebody who changes his hairdo every season or every two or three years. We need action. We need somebody who can bring in something which will assist those who need assistance.

Late last summer or early fall my party asked the government to create jobs, public works programs or grant tax credits or benefits to low and middle income earners, to put more money into circulation, and so on. The government has ignored

[Mr. Blackburn.]

this. But not president Carter. Not the United States, whose recovery is coming about much more rapidly than ours. In fact, I doubt whether we will have a real recovery in this country for at least a year and a half under present Liberal fiscal and monetary policies.

To twist this kind of economic problem into an emotional national unity issue in the hope that people who are hurting will forget their hurt feelings and come together in an election campaign to hold the country together is a fallacious and spurious approach to basic issues. I predict that unless we address ourselves to the economic issues of this country, an election based on the national unity issue will divide this country more than it is divided today. This is not so just with regard to Quebec; this applies to the prairies, to British Columbia and to Atlantic Canada. I do not know to whom the Prime Minister is listening these days but I do not think he is listening to the grassroots, to the people in the prairies or in British Columbia, to the ordinary people who go to work every day, who still have jobs, who come home at night to family meetings, who watch television, have debts and have to meet the budget every week. I think he is listening to some of the so-called "expert advisers" in the Liberal party here in Ottawa and to the bureaucrats.

We have to change our direction, Mr. Speaker. We cannot afford to continue in the same direction we are going now. Some of the writers in the popular press today are saying that not only have controls failed but they have made matters worse. How much longer we can continue with this kind of phoney economics is hard to say. The most recent poll reflects the growing concern on the part of average Canadians about the economy. Once again the Liberals have slipped two points. Obviously the national unity issue is not getting across to the majority of Canadians as the Prime Minister would like. Canadians today are still preoccupied with pocket book, bread and butter issues. I do not think the average Canadian expects anyone to wave a magic wand and make all our troubles go away overnight. I do not think the average Canadian wants a great deal in material terms. But I am sure the average Canadian is very concerned that we are not only not holding our own in terms of real income but also that we are falling back. Tremendous demands are being made upon Canadians to buy at a time when they simply do not have money. Wealthy Canadians do not spend a large proportion of their income anyway. They save it, invest it or bank it. The interesting thing is that even those who are in the middle income bracket are trying to do the same thing because they are afraid of what is going to happen tomorrow, next week or next year.

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In my opinion, the Canadian people have lost confidence in this government. They have not lost confidence in themselves. But what is the Prime Minister saying wherever he goes? He says; "Be proud that you are Canadian; be proud of yourselves; work harder." These are pious, stupid platitudes which he spews forth at political meetings that are very well orchestrated to make sure that 99.9 per cent of the people in the audience are Liberal supporters. Therefore, the account in the