

*The Budget—Mr. R. A. Bell*

Canadian history and never contemplated by the Fathers of Confederation or by any of our federal or provincial statesmen in almost 100 years.

A famous philosopher once said: "A nation which forgets its past condemns its future". Our past is one Canadian nation—not ten associated states. It is not the right, and certainly not the duty, of public men in the Parliament of Canada or in the provinces to repeal 100 years of constitutional history; it is not their duty to believe that the ultimate in statescraft is to emasculate the national government in favour of ten provincial administrations.

I am speaking strongly and deliberately and after much meditation. Nineteen sixty six must be the year which restores and revivifies Confederation, not the year which stultifies and harpoons all Canadian objectives and purposes. For, believe me, with a weak, emaciated federal authority, all semblance of nationhood will disappear.

Today, effective decisions on economic, constitutional and political issues of the gravest national importance are being assumed by federal-provincial conferences, and the Parliament of Canada is being by-passed. Delegation of decision making to federal-provincial conferences makes debate in this parliament little more than shadow-boxing. Undoubtedly there is an important role for meetings of federal and provincial officials, but that role is not the assumption, the usurpation, of effective political power in Canada.

The pretension of provincial premiers to national authority are false historically, unsound constitutionally and suicidal economically.

If members of this parliament of Canada, irrespective of party affiliation, will stand firm against erosions of and encroachments upon federal authority, I believe all Canadians will respond. I believe the people of all Canada, Quebec as well as Ontario, Nova Scotia equally with Manitoba, will refuse to see confederation compromised out of existence. But the time to speak up is now—next year may be too late.

One of the constitutional devices, of which I am not proud, is the opting out formula. At the time it was devised it appeared to be a brilliant solution of a constitutional impasse over university grants. I take full responsibility personally for having supported it. Had it ever occurred to me that it might have established a pattern whereby opting out has

become the rule and remaining in the exception, I would have opposed the institution of the formula with all the vehemence at my command. That I did not have the foresight to do so, is one of my major political regrets.

Far better that the Quebec universities should have suffered additional but eventually only temporary hardships, than that a new constitutional formula should have been devised which may well succeed in undermining the national authority of the parliament and government of Canada to influence, direct and where necessary regulate the national economy.

Two of everything does not contribute to nationhood, and heaven forbid the day should come when we have three or ten of everything. In my view, two pension plans are an abomination. Ten medicare plans will be worse. And this is happening at the very time when ordinary Canadian people seek unity and nationhood with an ardor never before experienced. Provincial politicians in British Columbia may seek to badger the essential unity of the nation, but the people of British Columbia do not.

Provincial politicians in Quebec may vie with one another in drawing blood from Ottawa, in inventing new terms and new theories emphasizing the state of Quebec—not the province, mark you—as a means of downgrading Ottawa. But I have travelled enough in all parts of Quebec and know enough of the real pulsing heart of that province to be certain—as morally certain as I have ever been of anything in my life—that the people of Quebec will respond equally with the people of Ontario to policies of genuine Canadianism, or if I may use the expression of one of my old chiefs, the late, delightful Dr. Bob Manion, to a red-blooded policy of Canada first. The citizen of Quebec is basically no different from the citizen of Ontario or Manitoba. First, he is a Canadian and second, he is a Quebecker. It is time that the political pygmies stopped trying to reverse that fact of life.

Mr. Speaker, only 254 days remain before this wonderful nation, this magnificent homeland of us all, enters the centennial year of her confederation. We must stop drifting; we must stop believing that necessarily all will be well in the end.

The next century for this most favoured land depends upon the adoption of positive, decisive, enlightened policies of national development. We in this twenty seventh Parliament must be as adventuresome but as