

The Budget—Mr. D. J. Johnston

doom is being preached in this country, not only by the opposition but from other quarters as well.

I see this country today as a country of unlimited potential and energy, with enormous coal reserves, untapped riches in the tar sands, hydroelectric power which could double within the next 15 years, and with one of the great forest reserves of the world, unmatched by any nation except, as I understand it, Russia and Brazil. We are endowed with one of the great freshwater reservoirs, minerals, and twice as much farmland per capita as the United States, although we are not quite as productive. Canada is a country of unlimited opportunity. That is why I say, that I am delighted to see those opportunities married to responsible financial policies, such as those contained in the budget brought down by the government.

● (1752)

It is clear to even the most cynical observer that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien), in his budget rejected seductive political proposals in favour of long-term economic growth which the country requires.

Turning for a moment to my own riding, I should like to point out that indeed it is not only an honour and privilege to represent Westmount, but also a challenge. I am called upon to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of the Hon. "Bud" Drury, whose distinguished career as a soldier, public servant and politician is well known to members on both sides of the House.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Johnston (Westmount): I was delighted to hear the hon. Leader of the Opposition pay homage to Mr. Drury. Even in his retirement from the House, he has gone on to accept several difficult mandates, and still serves the Canadian people.

In its wisdom, the riding of Westmount selected a Liberal by an overwhelming majority in the recent by-elections. Yet, I feel that in the minds of many Canadians, the Westmount riding conjures up the image of one of the two solitudes about which Hugh MacLennan wrote so many years ago: the solitude of the affluent English in the province of Quebec. The riding of Westmount is not such a bastion or fortress of the English-speaking population of the province of Quebec. In fact, Westmount today is symbolic of the Canada of the future, the pluralistic society which brings together so many of the wonderful differences present in Canada, such as racial, religious, economic and social. All those differences are present in that great riding. The riding comprises one of the most important influential Jewish communities in Canada, as well as one of the most important business communities and universities, combining all that in a riding which is predominantly English and very substantially bilingual.

From time to time the premier of Quebec, Mr. René Lévesque, has made reference to the metaphor used by Sir Winston Churchill of two scorpions in a bottle being representative of the relationship between the French and the English. I can assure Your Honour and all members of the

[Mr. Johnston (Westmount).]

House, that if that metaphor is applicable anywhere is Canada—and I personally do not think it is—certainly it is not applicable in my riding or in the city of Montreal.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

Mr. Johnston (Westmount): In fact, Mr. Speaker, the Westmount riding represents the Canada of tomorrow, where learning and speaking both official languages will be considered an opportunity and not an obligation.

At present, Mr. Speaker, we are observing in the Westmount riding a profound change in the attitude of the English-speaking population which is willingly taking part in the francization of Quebec. Anglophones, for example, are seeking opportunities to communicate and speak French with their fellow citizens, and it is astonishing to see, Mr. Speaker, that most of my Anglophone friends' children are attending either French schools or French immersion schools where both languages are taught. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, despite the Parti Québécois' efforts to create an attitude of confrontation between Anglophones and Francophones, exactly the opposite is happening today.

Mr. Speaker, since the conquest, Canadian history has taught us that the division between French and English in the province of Quebec is based on religious rather than language differences. Up until now these religious differences have almost separated the two societies or prevented their integration. In my view, the ease with which English-speaking Irish Catholics have integrated themselves into the French community, for example, is proof of this theory. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that is why today we find Francophones with names like Burns, O'Neill and Johnson, even in the Parti Québécois.

As we know, Mr. Speaker, these religious barriers have nearly disappeared. This is a very great change in Quebec. In my opinion, relations have never been as friendly and as positive. I believe that far from being confirmed, these two solitudes, of which Hugh MacLellan wrote, are rapidly getting closer together. We, English-speaking Canadians, who have not the slightest intention of leaving the province of Quebec, see in all this the potential for a multicultural society.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): It being six o'clock, I do now leave the chair until eight o'clock this evening.

At 6.03 p.m. the House took recess.

● (2002)

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.