

The Address—Mr. Epp

Since the time of the British conquest, the duality of Canada, with its French and English peoples, has dominated the political considerations of the day. At the time of confederation, agreements were reached that Canada would have two official languages. Federalism was adopted which allowed for the preservation of the cultures of the two peoples. Especially was this preservation sought by the citizens of Quebec and, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, by the citizens of Manitoba in 1869 and 1870. Added to this duality were the many nationalities who came to Canada, especially in the 1890s and the turn of the century, and again after the two world wars. Canada became a haven for them, a haven of religious and political freedom, a land of opportunity, a land where they could be equal and a land where they were not judged by their background or the accent with which they spoke the language of their new country. They were judged as human beings and people of worth. While we have had our differences in the past, these differences were not nearly as great as the bonds of friendship and the desire to live together as neighbours.

Since October 30, various political experts, self-styled, or otherwise have been saying that a great division exists between the English and the French in Canada. In Provencher we have a larger number of French-Canadians. They want the rights that are theirs by law, they want the rights that are theirs by tradition; but they are not using these ambitions as divine means to achieve an illusory goal.

There are those who argue that areas outside of Quebec voted against what is referred to by some as French power. The same people say that French-Canadians voted solidly for the party in government because it was the only party which cared for Quebec. It is argued that our party, following historic tradition, received a negative vote from the people of Quebec. While some of these observations may be partially correct, Mr. Speaker, the effect of such divisive statements, comments made in this House and attitudes that have been expressed by some, will be to create further division. It is a division which says simply that confederation is no longer workable: it says that we cannot live together any longer. I categorically reject these prophets of doom, and this House cannot be a party to such matters.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Epp: I therefore submit, Mr. Speaker, that the Prime Minister should not take it upon himself to create division. I see his statements as being an attempt at possible short-term political gain. Rather, he should immediately make his legislation known to this parliament and to the people of Canada. What does he plan to do about inflation? What does he plan to do about unemployment? Especially, what is he willing to do for people who are on fixed incomes, old age pensioners and people who are seeing their savings depleted each year because of the inflationary trend?

The Speech from the Throne also indicated that this government, the Prime Minister in particular, have suddenly become painfully aware of the western presence. I would like to read into the record part of an editorial which appeared in the *Winnipeg Tribune* of Monday last:

[Mr. Epp.]

The Prime Minister's program seems based on the assumption that the west was motivated by envy. We were upset at all the goodies that were going from Ottawa to central and eastern Canada, and we wanted our place at the jam pot. If he's not exactly giving us that, then at least he's spreading a little jam our way.

But there are other reasons why they might have turned against the Liberals. It may simply be that a lot of voters disliked the mystery men they elected in 1968—not only the Prime Minister but the many new backbenchers who came into office with him. It may have been their faces, their style or the cut of their clothes that turned the voters off. If that's the case, the people who think that way may well be angered that the men they voted against are clinging to power. The more the government uses its power to try to placate them, the angrier they may become.

Assuming the voter is a more rational beast, he may well have been upset not because his part of Canada was getting too little from Ottawa, but because the other parts were getting too much. Mr. Trudeau, after all, was the politician who promised Canada that there would be "no more of this free stuff". Those who believed him then are bound to be disgruntled now. Whether he can buy them off by passing out some of the "free stuff" to them as well remains to be seen.

I place special emphasis on the final paragraph:

In a moment of candour, Mr. Trudeau admitted not long ago that he has been unable to understand western Canadians. The election proved him right. The question now, despite the throne speech, is whether the prime minister now understands why he has been unable to understand the west.

Rural depopulation is an issue of great concern to us in western Canada. The economy of western Canada has always leaned very heavily on agriculture and on businesses which service this industry. The western farmer has consolidated; he has changed his methods and become more efficient. Thus, he has survived, not because of government programs but possibly, despite them. He has survived because of his own efficiency and his own enterprise.

Provencher is a good example of the new western agricultural community. We produce a major part of the poultry, beef and milk needed by the province. This is due to willingness on the part of our farmers to take risks and to expand, and it is a tribute to their enterprise that success has come their way.

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One program that does not help preserve the family farm is the capital gains tax which was instituted by the government. While we in this House and people right across rural Canada decry depopulation of the rural areas, we virtually make it impossible for sons to buy the farms of their fathers. Many of these young men and women, especially in western Canada, want to continue farming; it is a way of life they want to preserve. Yet despite certain government programs they are having great difficulty doing so, due to high interest rates and difficulty in obtaining low-interest loans. And now we have this destructive capital gains tax which is forcing young farmers to give up their ambition to farm, and find jobs in our urban centres. If we are seriously concerned about rural depopulation, we should tackle the problem at its source.

The Department of Regional Economic Expansion was designed to establish new industries in economically depressed areas. This was going to be the great panacea for western Canada. We were going to be ushered into the