

briefly on my constituency and on some of those who have represented Halifax-East Hants and Nova Scotia in this chamber and elsewhere.

All hon. members of this House are well aware of the importance of the contribution made by yourself and your confreres in the chair. As it happens, the hon. member whom I have succeeded has made the same important contribution as Deputy Speaker. In addition, for many years he served his constituents and all Nova Scotians in parliament in matters of special concern to them. Judge Robert McCleave, whom I succeed, was a long-time member of this House and an articulate and effective representative. It is apparent he was as much admired in this chamber as he was in Halifax-East Hants.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Crosby: Let me record the admiration I hold for Judge McCleave. I know the same sentiment is held by all his former constituents.

I would like to mention how honoured I feel at taking my seat in this House in the presence of the hon. member for Halifax (Mr. Stanfield) and the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker). Again I want to record the respect and admiration I hold for those hon. gentlemen. I was engaged in the public service of Nova Scotia during the early years of the administration of that province by the former Leader of the Opposition. Recently he celebrated his 30th year in government and in public service. Not only Nova Scotians, but all Canadians have benefited from his dedicated service over the years as premier of Nova Scotia and as the national leader of the official opposition. The reverence and respect with which the right hon. member for Prince Albert is held by Nova Scotians has not diminished in the years since he first held office as prime minister. When the right hon. member speaks, Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that Nova Scotians listen and will continue to listen.

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My references to Nova Scotia prompt me to mention that we now have in the province a new administration. The new government, headed by Premier John Buchanan, took office in October of this year. I have said on many occasions, and I repeat in this House, that Premier Buchanan will follow in the footsteps of the right hon. member for Prince Albert and the hon. member for Halifax (Mr. Stanfield) in providing leadership that is responsible and that is concerned. That is what I believe all Canadians expect of government today: they expect responsibility in the management of the nation's financial matters, responsibility in the administration of the affairs of state, and they expect those who govern to be concerned with the lives and the legitimate pursuits of all Canadians.

And so we should ask ourselves whether and to what extent the government and hon. members opposite have demonstrated responsibility and concern in this budget and in the other affairs of government. First, my thoughts extend not only to the constituency that I represent, but to my province and the

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Atlantic region as well as to Canada. It is a fact well known, and often recorded in the debates in this House, that Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada have not prospered in the passage of time since confederation. Nonetheless, the loyalty of the Atlantic people to confederation and to the sovereign lady who heads our state is unwavering and undiminished. Our loyalty will continue, whatever events the future holds. We are proud to be Nova Scotians, but we are equally proud to be Canadians, and we will never change. There is no support in my area for any policy or stratagem for our nation that does not embrace one Canada and our sovereign, the Queen.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Crosby: Nonetheless, Mr. Speaker, the economic forces that are present in our confederation demand review and reassessment. Halifax-East Hants, like many areas of Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada, does not have an assured economic base. This leads to an economic psychology in which hope for the future is often drowned in despair.

Historically, Canada has developed into regions which have been differently defined, but always on the basis of provincial boundaries. Over the past number of years, those who attempted to define the regions of Canada nearly always join the four most easterly provinces as the Atlantic region. Regardless of the measure used to determine the economic state of the regions, be it per capita income, employment or unemployment, or population and growth, the Atlantic region always comes out at the bottom of the scale. Needless to say, Ontario always comes out on top, although the areas to the west now challenge the economic superiority of central Canada.

What has developed from a comparison of the regions of Canada, however defined and whatever the measurement device, is the concept of regional disparity. What is more important is the question whether the federal government and the provincial administrations will recognize that we must move from a state of economic disparity to a state of economic equality.

The movement from disparity to equality is not an easy goal to reach. Some would regard it as improbable, if not impossible. To date, despite federal programs and provincial cooperation, there is no real evidence of progress toward economic equality across Canada in income, employment or opportunity.

Many knowledgeable people, particularly in the academic field, will contend that unless we resolve the problem of regional economic disparity and create equality in Canada, we will live with the possibility of national disintegration. I for one do not believe that this nation will disintegrate for economic or any other reasons, but I do believe the spirit of Canada can be so adversely affected by our economic state that, while we will not die as a nation, we will not obtain the quality of national life that we ought to enjoy as Canadians.

While all hon. members are bombarded on a daily basis with statistics respecting income levels, unemployment rates and other economic indicators, I think, Mr. Speaker, you will permit me to remind you that residents of Atlantic Canada