

The Address

comment period to the last intervention from the member for New Westminster—Burnaby I could immediately recognize the member for Elk Island before we adjourn this evening. Would there be consent?

• (2150)

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island): Mr. Speaker, I will begin in the traditional manner by congratulating you on your position and assuring you of my respect and co-operation. I consider it a great privilege to have been chosen by the electors of Elk Island to serve them as their member of Parliament.

As most other speakers have done I will also express thanks to the many people who voted and worked to give me this honour. Especially I am grateful to my wife Betty and my family for their sacrifice, support and trust.

The Elk Island constituency lies immediately east of Edmonton in Alberta and is noted for the fact that it contains Elk Island Park, a national park operated by Parks Canada.

The constituency has approximately 85,000 residents. Many live on acreages and farms. Our people earn their living by working in our industrial and chemical plants, by farming, by operating numerous small businesses and by many other forms of endeavour which add to the economy and well being of the community and the country. In addition many work in the city of Edmonton.

I am very proud and thankful to be a Canadian. I remember as a youth hearing my immigrant parents, grandparents and their friends talk of the hardships and the lack of freedoms which caused them to look to this land for hope.

More recently our son Brent has been working as a volunteer in a relief agency in the countries of Sudan, Kenya, Somalia, Bosnia and Croatia where he was helping to give aid to the tremendously disadvantaged because of war. We have been deeply touched by his first-hand accounts of children, young people, women and men who are starving or suffering intensely because of the inhumanity of selfish aggressive people. I am very grateful that in this country we govern ourselves with ballots and not with bullets.

It is in this context that I give my address today. While we have it so good, I am committed to doing my part to ensure that we do not lose our freedoms and privileges. I hope also that we will be able to continue to share our abundance and our help with many other unfortunate people in our hurting world.

It might sound as though I am complaining when I draw attention to the shortcomings of our past governments. I am very concerned that we run the risk of losing it all here in our wonderful Canada because of the mismanagement of government over the last 30 years.

It seems so obvious to me that the policies of the Liberals and the Conservatives of the past have taken us into the slavery of debt. I hope against hope that this new government will be able and will have the political will to begin to turn this around.

Just think there is no country in this world as blessed as ours. We have a wonderfully rich heritage of natural resources from fish to forest, from bounteous grain fields to plentiful energy in oil, gas and water, from beautiful scenery attracting tourists from all around the world to our wonderful land from Newfoundland to British Columbia to the far north.

I could go on and on. Add to that the enormous wealth we have in our people. We are all immigrants, even those who we proudly call our natives. Our first nations originally came here from a different part of the world. We have of course the French and the English, but we also have many others including the Scandinavians and the Orientals, the Europeans and the Africans. The list is endless. Over the years we have lived together in harmony and co-operation.

Mr. Speaker, you do not know how it hurts me to hear some who are working toward tearing up this country. If there is not room for all of us here in Canada, how can we expect the other nations of the world to stop warring with each other on this planet?

I would like to say to my friends sitting next to me how we wish they would change their minds about leaving Canada. How we wish that they would give it one more try. How we wish that they would stop saying Canada and Quebec and would start saying Quebec and the other provinces of Canada.

• (2155)

Will they consider doing what we have done in the west? For years and years we have paid much more into Confederation than we have received in dollars. For those same years we have been practising what many of us learned in Sunday school, that is to share and not be selfish, to give and not always to expect returns.

At the same time I must be honest. The patience of our position has on occasion been tested. We are looking forward seriously to the day when all the provinces will be able to better make it on their own and to decrease their dependence on others. It is very encouraging to see the generosity and benevolence of others too. We desire deeply that all Canadians and all provinces live together in peace and harmony as equal partners in Confederation.

That little diversion from the topic of debt was intentional. I thought that it would be a good idea to highlight our wonderful advantages, but let me now return to the topic of our burgeoning debt. How can it be that with this vast legacy of natural and human wealth our governments of the past have managed to dig us so deeply into debt? Is there any hope for the future?