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A STRONG AND HEALTHY FEDERATION

Addressing the opening session of the current federal-provincial conference at Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island on September 1, Prime Minister Pearson told the assembled premiers: "I think today of the words of the 60th Chapter of Isaiah: 'A little one shall become a thousand and a small one a strong nation. The Lord will hasten it in his time.' The Lord has hastened it in our time." Expressing gratitude to the Premier of P.E.I. "for the delightful and uniquely 'Island' welcome we have received", Mr. Pearson went on to observe that, while the delegates from the old Province of Canada "were not met by any such welcome when they first arrived here for the Conference 100 years ago", history recorded "that, when they left Charlottetown.... they were happy in the warmth of a new fraternity and the hope of a new nation". "That hope has been realized, and the fraternity is also with us today", the speaker declared, and continued his address as follows:

It is, of course, most fitting that a federal-provincial meeting should have been convened here to commemorate the centennial of the Charlottetown Conference. This was the point of time and place at which the grand but distant vision of Canadian Confederation emerged as a desirable and attainable goal.

The Charlottetown Conference was also the first of the inter-governmental meetings of which today's is a direct descendant - meetings which have, in effect, become a permanent part of our national governmental structure, through which, by co-operation, we can keep our federal system effective and acceptable.

Today, 100 years on, there are constitutional and racial and regional tensions in Canada. At times they seem to endanger our very survival as a nation, for strains of the present always create doubts about the future, in a nation no less than in an individual. This doubt is seized by the cynics and the faint-hearted to belittle the Canadian experiment and diminish its achievements. To counteract such defeatism we should spend more time rejoicing in our achievements, less in moaning about our difficulties.

Social unrest, economic pressures, federal-provincial differences, difficulties of the kind that are felt today - these have tested every Canadian generation, and no generation has failed to meet the test. Nor will we fail - we who enjoy riches and resources beyond the wildest dreams of those men who met here in 1864 - if we face up to our problems in the spirit and with the resolve of our forefathers.

The Fathers of Confederation combined a remarkably clear and sure sense of purpose and direction with a single minded dedication and determination to reach a goal. Within three years they converted their dream into the reality of a federal state, now grown beyond their imaginings.

If it is to continue to grow - as it will - we must acknowledge the realities of the strains imposed by our times on the national structure bequeathed to us; we must acknowledge them without being daunted by them. We must define them - and remove them.

For that purpose, we must have a sense of political realism, a passion for justice and a gift for compromise. We must also recognize that the basic

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