

*The Address—Mr. Osler*

that they can. Whether this is an absolutely ideal program or a program that is somewhat less than perfect, it is at least a program that has been partially successful.

I hope the members of the opposition will agree with me completely when I say that since we have Ottawa and the bureaucracy thinking constructively for once about the problems of the wheat farmers in the west, then let us keep it that way. These are problems that Canadians as a whole should be concerned with, just as much as Canadians as a whole were concerned with the problems of the textile industry, an industry that Parliament has been asked to bail out on a temporary basis until it finds its feet again. I contend that the Prairie farmers have to rationalize their operations, and trying to be funny about it is not going to help.

Once long ago one of the Fathers of Confederation called D'Arcy McGee prophesied that the hodge-podge of small colonies and vast territories comprising British North America would one day become a great northern nation. "For such it must become", he said, "if all of us do our duty to the last".

At the time he made that statement some people felt that we were outgrowing the Constitution, and they were trying to put together a new one. Whether or not we should be trying to do the same thing now is difficult to say, but it is a question that we should examine and that we are examining. As I said before, perhaps we should carry it on at the federal-provincial level, though so far the progress made has to my mind been very minimal. I suggest that the most promising level is that touched on earlier today by, I believe it was, the hon. member for Charlevoix (Mr. Asselin). I refer to the level that examines the relationship of individuals with their federal institutions. From the little I have seen as a member of the constitutional committee, this is a very promising avenue for our attention.

It is abundantly clear that a major source of the so-called alienation we are always hearing about is to be found in this relationship between the federal government, the central government, and the people of the country. Here I am not talking politically, speaking as a member of one party to another. This relationship has nothing to do with the other dialogue that is going on between the provinces and the central government, nor has it ever been adequately articulated by the provincial premiers during the three years they have been involved in constitutional review.

As I read the message of the people which I have heard so far, it seems self-evident that there is a viable Canadian community and Canadian personality manifest in our diverse cultural heritages and in our concern for the well-being of other Canadians. But our common institutions have, at least until recently, in their opinion appeared to be letting us down.

The federal position stated in "Federalism for the Future" is that the constitutional debate should review the rights of individuals before embarking upon a review of the rights of governments. From this, it is argued that we need a constitutional charter of human rights, and so on and so forth.

[Mr. Osler.]

In my opinion there is nothing wrong with this argument; it is a good concept. But with or without such a bill, many people today feel profoundly that as inhabitants of a particular region they are not being adequately heard in the centre, Ottawa. If this feeling has justification, then it shows that we must not only be concerned with human rights; we must also be concerned with federal institutions, which should be reformed regardless of what may happen as a result of the other dialogue between the premiers and the Prime Minister.

I am not talking about the merits or demerits of any particular federal party at this point. I am saying that in Canada we have a unique situation: we have a federal state that was set up about 103 years ago which positively guaranteed that there would be a preponderance of political power in the hands of the most populated regions.

The provinces of Ontario and Quebec dominate the federal-provincial scene. The sitting members from Ontario and Quebec, most of whom are very worthy members—I am not talking of personalities now—dominate the federal House of Commons. Indeed, these two provinces elect some 60 per cent of the sitting members. Therefore, I think it is little wonder that people are asking whether their message is getting through. They are not talking necessarily in the personal sense; rather they are talking of the fact that they have not greater muscle in this federal House that is theirs.

I think this was anticipated. In the days leading up to confederation both D'Arcy McGee and Alexander Galt recognized that "rep by pop" would not by itself be enough to cement Canada into a strong federal state. They suggested that there should be a Senate which represented Canada regionally on an equal basis. The Senate has perhaps not fulfilled the expectations that were originally invested in it, and I would say that this is because it is neither elected nor anything but a servant of its master, which is the House of Commons. Thus, how can it represent regions effectively? Personally, I think we should look very carefully into Senate reform. I do not feel that those who simply say we should abolish the Senate are advancing a very worthy or telling argument. I think we have to take a very hard look at Senate reform, because we have to have better and stronger representation on a regional basis.

If members of the House of Commons do not like the idea of Senate reform—and I can see all sorts of reasons why they would not like an elected Senate, which I think is the only way the Senate would be given muscle or credibility in the country—then it is incumbent upon them to put forward a better idea. This is an area that must be looked at and examined very closely.

One point that was made over and over again as the constitutional committee travelled across the country was that the Canadian people need some form of regional representation; and with the exception possibly of the provinces of Quebec and Ontario, which have natural boundaries of their own, the other provinces are not getting it. In this I include the province of Newfoundland. Until we find some way of letting the people in the