

*The Address—Mr. Collenette*

this week in the Chamber we heard the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) give one of his most brilliant and effective speeches.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Collenette:** In that speech he outlined succinctly the government's position on the economy and national unity. He demonstrated to the House how these two problems were intimately related and how they have an impact on both Quebec as a province and on the nation as a whole.

In contrast, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) and the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Broadbent), analysed the Quebec situation and the problems of the country generally. Both concluded that the source of all evil facing this country today emanates from our so-called poor economy. In my opinion these two hon. gentlemen and their parties are making a fundamental error in judgment.

As the Prime Minister stated on Wednesday, it is wrong to place the emphasis on economics and to dismiss perfunctorily the cultural and linguistic causes of today's dilemma.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Collenette:** In fact the only bone the Leader of the Official Opposition threw into the national unity debate was his rather shrill and sabre rattling cry for an instant referral of Bill 101 to the Supreme Court. This represents a callous attitude which is openly playing to the extreme point of view in English-speaking Canada. There is a vast array of moderate people in this country, both English and French-speaking, who are looking for rational approaches from Canada's leaders. They are looking for statesmanship in dealing with the national unity problem. On Wednesday the Leader of the Opposition demonstrated that he has forfeited any claim to provide effective and rational leadership in this entire national unity debate.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Collenette:** I should like to talk about the government's strategy on national unity. There has been much criticism in the English-speaking media that the government is taking no action and that it is sitting on its hands. That is not true.

I have been travelling around my constituency in order to speak at various service clubs and Rotary clubs. I have been talking about the government's strategy in dealing with the separatist threat. On the night of November 15 the Prime Minister said that the voters had done their democratic duty; they had elected a government, as was their right. He indicated that this government was a provincial government and, like all other provincial governments, it must abide by the constitution of Canada, which is the British North America Act at this particular time. In late last winter and early spring of this year the Prime Minister took his case to the country and attacked the basic premises of separatism. He defended and promoted the cause of Confederation. In fact he took his case to my own constituency on February 17 and made a stimulating address to the students of East York Collegiate.

[Mr. Collenette.]

The third phase in the government's strategy has been as dangerous as it has been necessary. It can accurately be described as marking time and waiting while the Parti Quebecois comes to grips with the real problems of government, and while the honeymoon with Quebec voters began to end for Mr. Levesque. Although this phase in the strategy has caused some disquiet in English Canada over the past few months, we have seen that Mr. Levesque's preoccupation with language and culture, and his neglect of economic issues, have seriously weakened his own position in Quebec. The Quebec economy is in serious trouble.

As has been pointed out by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien), the Parti Quebecois has caused a flight of capital, technical know-how and skills from that province. The summer has allowed Quebecers to focus on their own problems without the diversion of federal intervention, and has exposed the ideological division within the Parti Quebecois. This is demonstrated by the public cabinet decision-making now being engaged in by Mr. Levesque over the appointment of a language commissioner, by the rather frustrated views of Mr. Parizeau, and his nasty attacks on our own Minister of Finance.

The latest phase in the government's strategy began in September with the Prime Minister's offer to entrench minority language rights in the constitution. This was severely criticized by the opposition and by English-speaking Canada. The Prime Minister's offer demonstrated his own flexibility and demonstrated the flexibility of this government and of the Liberal party in dealing with the problems of the country. As the Prime Minister pointed out on Wednesday, the government is quite open to further changes in the constitution to accommodate the real needs and aspirations of all provinces, and not only the province of Quebec.

The next phase in this general strategy dealing with Quebec separatism will come forward in the next election. The next election will not be about what party is best suited to deal with national unity. No one on this side can convincingly argue that the Leader of the Opposition or the Leader of the New Democratic Party are any less committed or any less sincere in their desire to keep this country together. No one in his right mind would make this claim. The essential question for Canadians to decide next year is not which party is more dedicated to Canadian unity than the others, but which party offers a program of new constitutional and economic arrangements which will satisfy the west, the Atlantic region and, indeed, all the regions of Canada, and not only Quebec.

The NDP argues that the present constitutional arrangement, with some minor tinkering, will suffice. The New Democratic Party, with its natural Marxist bias, argues that an economic solution is the only way to preserve Confederation. The Progressive Conservative party appears to be following its traditional philosophy which favours a greater decentralization and a greater devolution of power or authority to the provinces.