

It was as it says, Mr. Speaker, "A brilliant review of the vital issues of the present campaign," but it reminded me very much of political speeches I have heard in more recent times.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): In Peterborough?

Mr. Faulkner: Never in Peterborough.

There are two particular points to be considered in dealing with this man. If you read this material about Sir John A. Macdonald and read some of his speeches, one of the facts that impresses itself upon you is the extraordinary relevance of what he said at that time to the situation today, particularly in two areas that have been alluded to. One is that he was a nationalist, and the other is that he understood the rights of the minority as few Canadians have done. He understood the significance of language rights. If we had only had the wisdom as a people to follow the advice of Sir John A. Macdonald on language rights and minority rights, we would have largely eliminated the problems we face in this country today.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Faulkner: I should like to turn briefly to his record as a nationalist and the relevance of that today. One authority on Sir John A. Macdonald, of course, is the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker). In the debates of January 11, 1967, commemorating the 152nd anniversary of the birthday of Sir John A. Macdonald, the right hon. member for Prince Albert said:

—his principle for Canada, that it must be an independent nation on the north half of the North American continent willing to co-operate in freedom but insisting on the right that policies for Canada be made by Canadians. That was his contribution.

Mr. Speaker, that has extraordinary relevance to Canada and to Canadians today. He rejected the liberal option of that day of free trade. In many ways that option could be viewed, to use modern language, as the continentalist option today. He rejected it then, and many of us who are looking at a similar proposition in contemporary terms are wondering if we should not be equally vigilant against the continentalist option. For that reason Sir John A. Macdonald's relevance today is undisputed.

• (5:40 p.m.)

I read an article in *Maclean's* about the formation of a committee for an independent Canada. I suggest that if Sir John A. Macdonald were alive today, he would be a charter member of the committee for an independent Canada. As one reviews the eight-point program of that group it becomes clear that the nationalist position has as much relevance today as the nationalist policy had in 1878 and in subsequent elections. I will not go into the program of the committee for an independent Canada.

Mr. McGrath: Please do.

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Mr. Faulkner: Those who are concerned about the classic problem of Canadian national identity and Canadian policy could well review this program in light of some of the advice given by Sir John A. Macdonald.

I should like to make another point which deals with the other element of his policy. This, too, is extremely relevant to our scene today. I am speaking of his policy in the area of language rights. He made a great speech on February 17, 1890, in which he dealt with language rights in the Northwest Territories. The hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie) pointed out very ably the circumstances in which he made the speech. Considering the prevailing degree of religious bigotry that characterized not only this country but other countries, the degree of distrust that characterized relations between language groups and religious groups in this country, when Sir John spoke in this area, and particularly when he spoke in a way that had a particular affect on his following within his own party, he acted with extraordinary wisdom and courage. As I said before, if we had only had the wisdom to follow the example of Sir John A. Macdonald on this delicate question throughout our history, many of the problems that plague us today would not exist. In his speech on February 17, 1890, he said:

I have no accord with the desire expressed in some quarters that by any mode whatever there should be an attempt made to oppress the one language or to render it inferior to the other; I believe that would be impossible if it were tried, and it would be foolish and wicked if it were possible. The statement that has been made so often that this is a conquered country is *à propos de rien*. Whether it was conquered or ceded, we have a constitution now under which all British subjects are in a position of absolute equality, having equal rights of every kind—of language, of religion, of property and of person.

If we had had the wisdom to follow the principle of the first, second and fourth points, our history until 1970 might have been somewhat different and, hopefully, somewhat happier. Throughout the speech—and it is a speech of wisdom and courage—he asks: Why is language so important to individuals? Halfway through the speech he says:

Why, Mr. Speaker, if there is one act of oppression more than another which would come home to a man's breast, it is that he should be deprived of the consolation of hearing and speaking and reading the language that his mother taught him. It is cruel. It is seething the kid in its mother's milk. The greatest, perhaps, of all the objections to this measure is that it is a futile measure. It will not succeed.

He understood precisely the significance of language for our people. Our failure in part to understand this has puzzled me in the debate we have had in recent years on language rights. I happen to be one whose mother tongue is the tongue of the majority in this country, if one likes to put it that way; yet I know the umbrage and strength of feeling I would bring to bear if I were in the minority position and my right to use the language in which I had been raised, which embodies the heritage of which I am proud, were interfered with in any way. My feelings would be as strong as the feelings of the people who are in the minority position.

Sir John A. Macdonald had the wisdom to see the importance of the question and to see its relevance to our