

Mr. Pearson: We do not need to have it offered to us. To assert the contrary is an insult to those who discharge their democratic privileges as Canadian voters and to those who serve their country in this house or in provincial legislatures.

• (2:50 p.m.)

To those who would set us free, we answer "We are free". To those who would disunite us, we answer "We remain united, in a federal system which is being brought into line with the requirements of our time and of our origins and history". On April 19, 1960, the gallant and illustrious head of another state, speaking in Ottawa, had this to say; I quote from his speech:

And now, how do you Canadians appear to us? Materially, a new country, of vast size, mighty resources, inhabited by a hard-working and enterprising people. Politically, a state which has found the means to unite two societies, very different in origin, language and religion; which exercises independence under the British crown and forms part of the commonwealth: which is forging a national character even though spread out over three thousand miles alongside a very powerful federation; a solid and stable state.

Mr. Speaker, I agree with those words of General de Gaulle in 1960. I disagree with his words in November 1967.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): First of all, Mr. Speaker, may I welcome the Prime Minister back to the house and back to Canada, and congratulate him upon the honour bestowed upon him by the city of London in extending to him the freedom of that city. May I also assure him that in welcoming him back in this manner I do not wish to be understood as casting any reflection upon the manner in which the Acting Prime Minister presided over the house in his absence.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Stanfield: Canadians will certainly resent the statement made by President de Gaulle and regard it as an intrusion into our domestic affairs. We in Canada, a free democratic country, are quite capable of running our own affairs, so we must certainly object to the statement, just as the Prime Minister has objected to it.

It may be there is no practical way of stopping this kind of interference. This is the second time it has occurred, and it may occur again. I say that while we must object to this

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kind of interference, our maturity as Canadians requires something further of us. While objecting to this unfortunate attempt at interference we are, I hope, mature enough not to allow such an attempt by somebody outside of Canada to affect the relationship among Canadians inside Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Stanfield: It seems to me we would do ourselves a disservice if we allowed this incident to provoke us to any word or deed which could poison the climate in our own country or make it more difficult to arrange our own affairs satisfactorily. It would in effect make this attempt at interference effective if this statement by General de Gaulle were to give rise to immoderate exchanges within our own borders which could undermine the earnest efforts of Canadians themselves to work out their own arrangements to strengthen confederation.

At the present time in Toronto a constructive conference is being held at which provincial representatives and others are examining the problems within our own country. There are, of course, other constructive efforts going forward in our country. Mr. Speaker, I suggest in all earnestness that we should not allow this attempted outside interference to distract us in any way from our own purpose, which is to build a stronger Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Burnaby-Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, I would like to associate myself with the words of the Leader of the Opposition in welcoming back the right hon. Prime Minister, and to say we are glad to see him in such good form upon his return to the House of Commons.

I am very glad the Prime Minister has made a statement with reference to the pronouncements by President de Gaulle. I think our response to those pronouncements ought to be restrained. I feel much the same about President de Gaulle's statements at this time as I felt about his famous "Vive le Québec libre" last fall; that is, that we ought not to allow this to provoke us into hysterical and provocative replies. We ought to make it perfectly clear to President de Gaulle, or to the head of state of any other country in the world, that we Canadians are quite capable of resolving our own problems without unsought or uncalled for advice from any quarter whatsoever.