

*National Unity*

all I would like to remind the hon. member for Brome-Missisquoi (Mr. Grafftey) that he heard, as well as I did, the right hon. Prime Minister telling the House that he had been called to Vancouver to meet the president of Germany and that this trip had been planned several months ago and that this debate was postponed until this week to accommodate the NDPs who were holding a convention last week. So you should at least be honest about those things.

Mr. Speaker, unity does not mean uniformity. Despite everything that distinguishes us, we must seek, find and develop the links that unite us. We will have to find a middle ground towards a new federalism, seek and find our own identity and build a country upon our common resources. We will have to build a country based on equity and understanding, justice and equality. This equality cannot be based on the balance of numbers. It will have to be based on a definition of this Canadian society which will be tolerant and respectful towards minorities, whether they are linguistic, cultural, social or economic minorities.

It took an electoral victory on November 15 last to make many Canadians consider the separation of Quebec as a threat and to force them to reassess our confederative pact in the light of the important part the French-speaking group has to play. We will have to define what we want, what we hope to find to ensure the existence of a united country where all classes of society, from the richest down to the poorest, can live fully and have their share of the tremendous wealth of our national heritage in every area, whether cultural, social or economic.

In 1963, Mr. Speaker, the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism stated the following: "Canada, without fully realizing it, is going through the greatest crisis in its history". Needless to say that this warning left most Canadians a little puzzled and sometimes unconcerned. The anglophone press namely overreacted to the comments of the authors of the report, as evidenced by its question: "What does Quebec want?"

Things have changed and this change came about in some cases by means of political violence, educational conflicts in several provinces, through a failure to understand the objectives of institutional bilingualism, regional and provincial opposition in linguistic matters at the local level and the gradual rise of the Quebec identity which now exists, Mr. Speaker. All that have led to the present debate on Canada and national unity. If I speak a bit sharply, Mr. Speaker, it is because I feel somewhat distressed. I think it is the word that sums up all others and the only one that can reflect the fears expressed by a group to which I belong and which, in my case, is the Francophone minority of Ontario.

Recently, speaking at the opening of the conference on the future of our country entitled *Destiny Canada*, Georges Ramsay-Cook, a history professor, said, and I quote:

The Canada of 1867 was a nation composed of areas whose inhabitants wished to preserve their own identity within a common Canadian framework.

Professor Cook stresses the fact that this dual allegiance exists in all areas and, still according to him, there is no doubt

that all Canadians, regardless of their area, cultural group, class or sex, refuse above all to be condemned to that permanent minority status and want Canada to give them the possibility of achieving relative equality. If a society is to be judged by the way in which it treats its minorities, whether linguistic, cultural, social or economic, the sense of equity, freedom and equality will have to be awakened in Canadians. We can no longer continue to witness, like helpless spectators, the deterioration of the situation, the tearing to shreds of the national fabric.

English Canada will have to be perceived in its actions as being big enough to deal with Francophone groups on an equal footing and recognize in them communities worthy of its respect and of assuming the place that is rightly theirs in every sphere of activity. That challenge will have to be met, Mr. Speaker, while asserting ourselves individually and collectively, and also respecting the rights of our fellow citizens of other origins. For some in the English provinces, that requirement does not seem essential, considering all the injustices that French-speaking Canadians have been subject to since the beginnings of Canada. If the famous question "What does Quebec want?" becomes as enigmatic as "What will happen in Quebec?", we are obviously facing a disquieting and disconcerting situation. What will happen in Quebec will be determined as much by what will happen in the other provinces in the next few years. Let us hope that the poor record of the English provinces to date will not prompt some to find other Plains of Abraham.

● (2110)

After 110 years, is it not appropriate to look seriously at past mistakes in order to correct them and build a country within which differences are considered an asset, a positive element and where experience serves to eliminate injustice? Of course, we need a new formula since after 110 years one of the partners is talking about separation or even divorce. What worries me about the possibility of separation with economic association, is not the sharing of assets or the financial settlement, but indeed who will be responsible for Lord Durham's heirs. Yes, what will happen to the linguistic minorities if Quebec separates from the rest of Canada? Some claim they will soon be assimilated. Others, that they will be used as hostages by both French Quebec and English Canada. Personally, I feel that chances are that we, the Canadian minorities, will become the Palestinians of North America.

As early as 1912, French-Canadians faced the same problem. Monsignor Langevin, a bishop from western Canada, opened the French Language Convention held from June 24 to 30, 1912, with these words, and I quote:

As far as we are concerned, no one has the right to stop the French-Canadians at the boundary of the province of Quebec and tell them: Beyond this line, you are no longer at home . . . We are at home everywhere in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, those words still apply today. As I said earlier, we must study the matter from the point of view of the errors made with a view to correcting them, rather than dreaming up grandiose schemes or rely on more or less theoretical and often emotional formulae on national unity. Over the past ten years,