

*The Address—Mr. Fortin*

It would be extremely unfortunate indeed if the same spirit of co-operation and understanding had not inspired all the contracting parties when the confederative pact was signed in 1867.

It is almost a century since the fathers of confederation, Macdonald, Cartier, Chapais, Tache and the others, wanted to unite all Canadians forever and place them on an equal footing. We note with regret that their dream is only half fulfilled. As a matter of fact, we have to admit that the two races stand no longer on an equal footing.

One of the causes of this inequality results from the fact that, under cover of the war, the federal government, with the complicity of provincial governments, and especially that of the province of Quebec, invaded the field of jurisdiction exclusively set apart for the provinces under the confederative pact. I suggest that had our constitution been scrupulously respected, we would not have known certain issues which are now facing us.

Is this the result of ill will on either side? I should not think so. French Canadians have contributed very closely to Canadian unity. English-speaking Canadians have contributed a lot too, but my firm belief is that they would have done much more if they had better known and better understood my compatriots.

I have been more or less actively interested in politics for quite a number of years. During those years, I have heard oftentimes men like Bourassa, Lavergne, my predecessor in Montmagny, and others clamour for justice on behalf of French Canadians. Have we gained any ground since? That is the question.

There have been positive actions; certain attitudes have changed, it is true. This government has given living proof of its understanding towards my fellow citizens. However, I am still convinced that the majority of Canadians have not yet recognized the principle of equality as between Canadians. As far as we are concerned, it is a continuous struggle; we must always fight energetically to obtain, not privileges nor favours, but pure and simple recognition of rights which belong to us.

Here in Ottawa, we are not in the capital of a bilingual country, at least nothing would make us believe so. Yet, we have heard the Queen of Canada speak to Canadians in a very pure French, thus recognizing the bilingual character of this country. Other outstanding personalities have followed in her footsteps. At

the end of my remarks, I shall make certain suggestions which, if implemented, will appreciably correct the present situation.

I am confident that this government, which has given evidence of its good will since it has been in power and which has done more for the recognition of the bilingual character of this country than all preceding governments, will sympathetically consider the suggestions I shall make in all good faith, as the spokesman for 5 million French-speaking Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, the causes of separatism are serious, I would even say very serious. I believe that the best way to correct a situation such as the one which we know at present, is to recognize the great principle of the equality of both races and to admit the basis of our rightful claims. The time for election promises, repenting promises like those made in Quebec city by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Pearson) a few months ago, is now gone.

The time has now come for all Canadians to make a serious soul-searching and an analysis of the situation. If Canadians want confederation to survive, it is time the great principle of equality of all Canadians be recognized.

I have stressed the fact, a moment ago, that this government has done more than the others to recognize bilingualism in Canada, and I shall give some concrete evidence of this.

When the previous government, in 1952, appointed a Canadian to the post of governor general, its initiative was commendable. However, when the term of office of Mr. Vincent Massey had expired, on February 1, 1957, the then Liberal government missed a unique opportunity to appoint as his successor a French-speaking Canadian.

This government, on August 1, 1959, appointed Major General Vanier, a great diplomat, a gallant soldier, a glorious son of French Canada, as governor general of Canada. It was a day of glory for all Canadians; on that day a new hope was kindled in the hearts of my compatriots.

For many years, the present Minister of Transport (Mr. Balcer) asked the former government to provide the House of Commons with simultaneous translation so that members could speak in their mother tongue. This project was not carried out until a Conservative government came into power.