

The Address—Mr. Gregoire

opposition has a vital role to play. It is the role of the opposition to act as a watchdog. It is the role of the opposition to offer constructive criticism. It is the role of the opposition to oppose those measures which it does not believe to be right or in the public interest. As members of the official opposition, these are the tasks to which we have set ourselves.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Gregoire (Lapointe): Mr. Speaker, at the outset of my remarks. I want to pay tribute—and I hope that my colleagues will join with me in so doing—to the unfortunate Canadian Jesuits who have just been deported from Haiti.

I am well acquainted with the works of the Jesuits in Canada, having studied eight years in one of their classical colleges. Moreover—and I do not hide the fact as I am quite proud of it—I spent two years and a half as a member of their order.

I wish to pay tribute to them, more especially as the Jesuits, by the blood shed by their first martyrs, succeeded in furthering civilization in Canada; they have always advocated the practice of moral virtues and the principles of Christian charity in our country.

Mr. Speaker, a few days ago we heard the Prime Minister of this country deliver a very eloquent speech. In magnificently sincere accents, he made an appeal for Canadian unity. However, I did not applaud.

About a year or a year and a half ago—I believe it was in December 1962—when the present Prime Minister was in the opposition, he had delivered a similar speech and I had applauded him vigorously for the speech, to my mind, was magnificent.

A year ago, when the present Prime Minister delivered another speech of the same type, I applauded and approved him. This year, I could not do so, as I realize that after two years those are only words, high-sounding words as always but no action. Besides, that is what I have noticed during the two years that I have been sitting in this house.

Mr. Speaker, we are all for the ideas put forward in his speeches by the present Prime Minister, but we want those speeches to be followed by action. In brief, we want those plans to be carried into effect and we do not want to be put off with speeches, year after year, like in the past. We want action which will clearly indicate his sincerity and his desire to solve the problems now facing our Canadian confederation and the two national groups forming our country.

Mr. Speaker, we must find a realistic, concrete and satisfactory solution for each and every Canadian citizen living in this country.

And today, I should like to suggest what I think could form the basis of a discussion to find such a solution.

It is clear that our present system can no longer operate and cannot give satisfaction to the majority of the citizens in our country. Today, our system is based on compromise between English and French Canadians, and that compromise is hindering a proper development satisfactory to both those groups. Well, a country cannot be developed by basing its system of growth on compromise. Bold and daring solutions must be found, solutions based, not on compromise, but on realistic and logical principles which can give satisfaction to both those groups making up the country.

As a matter of fact, you only have to consider our present system to realize that it can no longer operate. For instance, the Prime Minister stated in his speech that the over-all picture of unemployment all across the country had improved and that there was a significant decrease. If that is what happened in other provinces, the situation has not improved very much in the province of Quebec and in eastern Canada.

I have other examples to give you. Our legislation, in Canada, is made for local groups and not for the whole Canadian population; some groups are able to take advantage thereof but the majority of the people do not. I shall even go so far as to say that such pieces of legislation are detrimental to certain regional groups.

Let us take, for instance, the field of agriculture. Last year, we were promised an eastern Department of Agriculture in view of the differences between farming problems in western Canada and in the province of Quebec. This year, we note that this government changed its mind and did not keep its promise.

When I go back to my riding, where conditions are the same as in all the other ridings in the province of Quebec, to state that the farmer's loan act is very effective in the prairie provinces in assisting the farmers in that area, but that it has not been adapted to the needs and requirements of our province, our citizens cannot help realizing that the act is made to apply to one region and not to the whole country.

Every week, every month, we inevitably have some examples in that respect. Let us take, for instance, the activity in the construction industry; lately there has been discussion about the benefits of the new acts in increasing activity in the building industry, and even the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) said last Thursday:

The number of housing units started last year totalled 148,000 units as compared with some 130,000