

*The Address—Mr. Meunier*

The case they had to defend was rather weak and their arguments were not too convincing, but nevertheless I congratulate them for their courage and also for assuming their responsibilities and carrying out their duty.

I must also congratulate the Deputy Speaker on his appointment. Knowing his competence and his integrity, I am sure that he will conduct our proceedings with fairness and dignity.

The speech from the throne sets out the legislation to be brought before the house during the coming months.

Other members who spoke before me or will speak later on undertook or will undertake to emphasize its omissions which cause Canada to have no definite policy, a situation which, in my opinion, gives rise to unrest within Canada and concern abroad.

I should now like to single out statements included in the speech from the throne which are just political footballs.

First, there is the proposed amendment to section 94a of the constitution to establish a contributory old age pension plan and other benefits. The Prime Minister mentioned that in 1958. He did not say a word about it for four years, and now that we are on the eve of an election, he brings it up again to offset the program advocated by the Liberal party before the opening of the session.

The national grid system is another political football. This project which would require the provinces' consent would make it possible to convey power from one province where it is abundant to another province where it is scarce.

The principle itself may have some merits but the provinces where power is plentiful will have to think twice before parting with such resources.

Indeed, that project is merely intended to please the provinces which do not have enough power. It did not seem advantageous to a member of the national energy board, Mr. H. L. Briggs, who explained the proposed system before the Engineering Institute of Canada. His remarks were quoted by the hon. member for Laurier in the speech he made January 25 last, as reported on page 188 of *Hansard*.

I should now like to turn to what the hon. member for Joliette-L'Assomption-Montcalm (Mr. Pigeon) said in this house on January 23 and as recorded in the official report, page 113, which reads as follows:

There has always been numerous reasons for French Canadian dissatisfaction with the federal

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government. Some were well founded and others were merely based on prejudice. However, one of the most serious causes of discontent of French Canadians throughout Canada, and not only in Quebec, was undoubtedly the offhand and indifferent attitude of the previous government not only toward the French Canadian minority, but towards all minorities in Canada. And minorities then included everything that was not Liberal, not Grit.

According to the hon. member, the Liberal party which was in power from 1935 to 1957 was responsible for the discontent of French Canadians throughout the country because of its offhand and indifferent attitude towards all minorities in Canada.

The hon. member's statements are not too clear; indeed, one minute he speaks of the discontent of French Canadians throughout the country and, the other, of the discontent of minorities in Canada.

It is easy to tell, when you read the hon. member's address, that he is not quite clear on that point, that there is still some confusion in his mind on that matter, but not enough, though, to prevent him from asserting anything.

However, to illustrate that discontent and to give strength to his argument, the hon. member gave us an example. I quote:

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, I seriously think that the previous government which could have done so much during the 22 years it was in power, is greatly responsible for the discontent of certain groups of Canadians. Some people were driven to despair by the lack of understanding of the government of the time.

Need I illustrate the point? In 1942, there was only one member from Quebec in the Canadian cabinet.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know where the hon. member got his information and I did not try to check that. However, I can tell him honestly, that under the Liberal administration in 1942, after the death of the Right Hon. Ernest Lapointe and the resignation of Hon. P. J. A. Cardin, and before the Right Hon. Louis St. Laurent was sworn in, the French Canadian ministers in office, whether there was one, two or three, had as much value, each single one of them, as the whole group of French Canadian ministers who are now members of the cabinet under the present government.

As far as the treatment of minority groups under a Liberal administration is concerned, the hon. member for Joliette-L'Assomption-Montcalm had better read his history. Then, he would know that the members of minority