

*The Address—Mr. Courtemanche*

the repudiation of principles stated often but rejected on every occasion.

Representing as I do an historic constituency, I do not want to omit mentioning the man who has brought such renown to it, that is to say the eminent patriot and great statesman Henri Bourassa.

Many of those who sit here have known him well and they recall the battles he waged in defence of our rights, our language and our religion.

Unfortunately, he retired from active political life at a time when his eloquence and his experience would have been so helpful to us. However, if this outstanding orator can no longer be admired on the political scene, his ideas have gone forward and no one should be surprised today if the electors of Labelle have shown a reaction and proved that the people are still capable of thinking and passing judgment.

Above political parties must stand the Canadian motherland, which is still sacred to all well-born men and which must be the supreme guide of all honest citizens. There is nothing wrong in supporting one party or another, but we should not sacrifice everything to political parties. Before voting Liberal or Conservative the people should vote in accordance with the common weal and the general interest.

One of the measures of great interest to the members and the population of Quebec was the statement concerning Canada's constitutional future. We are told that the Liberal government intends to ask the house to approve "measures designed to facilitate the attainment of the constitutional limits of our nationhood". It was with a surge of pride and some astonishment that we heard about this welcome piece of news. Nations, no less than individuals, aspire to maturity, to majority. Canada came of age one hundred years ago. Therefore, that measure is not premature; on the contrary. We have only praise for the government concerning that inspired move. Common sense and judicial sense are not the prerogative of any one nation. Our jurists are just as competent as those of other nations, even those of Great Britain. It is very good and even beneficial to build up a legal structure.

In principle, any true Canadian will consider it antiquated that a so-called autonomous country should have to take its cases to a foreign court. By abolishing appeals to the privy council we would affirm our sovereignty. The principle of the law is excellent. However, when there is evidence of subtlety and tactics in disputes between federal and provincial governments, we may wonder whether the rights of minorities will eventu-

ally be well protected. Once the supreme court becomes the last court of appeal, will it be a complaint instrument in the hands of the government?

Another matter, Mr. Speaker, of great importance, is that of the amendment to the constitution of 1867. The matter has been brought up before.

Building our confederation took years of labour by jurists and patriots. Then again, in principle, the amendment is a good thing but in practice we must proceed with care, with vision, lest we infringe the letter and the spirit of the pact of 1867.

Present evils are blamed on the constitution, which is claimed to have become a strait-jacket, not only delaying but impeding Canada's development. That is only a smoke-screen.

The great principles set forth in 1867 must be respected, especially as far as the rights of minorities are concerned. The constitution can only be amended after careful and honest scrutiny of the people's sovereign rights. Was that not the intention of the fathers of confederation? One of them, Macdonald, who became prime minister of Canada, asserted that there were "neither victors nor vanquished".

The aim of the constitution was to enable the two main ethnical groups of Canada, the French and English-speaking elements, to co-operate in the achievement of Canada's destiny.

In Canada, peace and happiness on the one hand, or internal division, discontent and impediments on the other hand, will depend on the wisdom and the fairness with which these measures are implemented.

I sincerely hope that this epoch-making session will enable our country to attain a degree of development truly in keeping with the wealth of its soil, the sterling qualities of its people, and the exceptional geographic and economic advantages that are Canada's heritage.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I may say without exaggeration that, on the international scene, Canada's destiny is at hand.

(Text):

**Mr. J. H. Harrison (Meadow Lake):** Mr. Speaker, may I add my congratulations to those that have gone before on your elevation to your present high office. As a new member representing Saskatchewan, I appreciate the great honour, I am sure, of addressing you in this house. I should like to compliment my good friend and colleague the member for Nicolet-Yamaska (Mr. Boisvert) on his address in reply to the speech from the throne. The hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr.