

*Anniversary of First Session of Parliament*

We are all proud of our parliament, our advances and our democracy. In my opinion, we have the duty today to revise our rules and parliamentary procedure, to modernize our practices and even our ideas so as to solve our serious problems and particularly the problem of national unity.

**Mr. Réal Caouette (Villeneuve):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with great attention a while ago to the remarks of the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) who told some stories about the first session of the first Canadian parliament. I think that there were only two parties in the house at that time, the Conservative and Liberal parties. Now, we must admit that parliament has grown richer these past years, since there are here good Social Crediters.

Mr. Speaker, nobody mentioned that, in 1867, the sovereign government of Canada which was sitting for the first time and which had to pass some legislation was tackling the same problems which we are now experiencing. But then, the Bank of Canada did not exist. It was created later. And we are still facing the same problems as in 1867.

And when, in 1934, the government decided to establish the Bank of Canada, it was to achieve financial independence in order to make it possible to gain economic independence. Now, we have parliamentary independence. We are using it after a fashion. The fathers of confederation did not know what we know today and could not anticipate that we would now face productivity and development problems. Canada was vast; means of communications were non-existent and it took ever so long to cover a constituency. There were no automobiles, no railroads, no airplanes. People did not know each other at all.

• (3:20 p.m.)

Times have changed a lot; the problems too have changed and solutions must change. Yet, we have not achieved our economic independence.

Having said this, Mr. Speaker, let us revert to the more serious concerns of today, the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the first sitting of the first session of modern Canada.

Since this first session, where only four provinces were represented, many things have changed. Six provinces have been added to the four original ones, in addition to two territories, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories which have joined Canada, and our beautiful and vast country has since undergone stupendous, I might even say miraculous, development and progress.

During one hundred years, our country has experienced glory but also many blighted hopes. It has been in constant evolution involving concrete and happy achievements but also many cases of injustice which should not repeat themselves at the dawn of a new century.

Everyone knows that we have a constitution which confers rights and imposes duties to the federal as well as to provincial governments. The most elementary justice, understanding, tolerance should not be the responsibility of only one sector of our country, and that is why I say to the Canadian nation that the letter and especially the spirit of the Canadian constitution have, until now, been respected only in the province of Quebec. That is why, Mr. Speaker, on the commemoration of our Canadian parliamentary institution, I urge the leaders and the people of all Canadian provinces to treat in their respective boundaries our French-speaking minorities as Quebec has treated and is still treating the English-speaking minority within its boundaries. It is on that condition only that we will be able to achieve fully the understanding, the friendship and the unity so necessary to the development and the maturity of our wonderful country.

Co-operation and tolerance are not one-way streets. An English-speaking Canadian must feel at home everywhere in Canada, even in Quebec, but a French-speaking Canadian must feel at home not only in Quebec but in all the provinces of Canada. That does not mean, Mr. Speaker, that all English-speaking Canadians must learn French, no more than all French-speaking Canadians must learn English. No. But that means that within their respective provinces, if Canadians really accept the fact of co-existence or the circumstances in which they should live, they ought to learn, at all costs, to respect others who do not speak their language, who do not have the same culture, and I say that not only in my own province but in every province.

I think that the central government which has no business interfering with provincial matters, could at least make suggestions when federal-provincial conferences take place. It could suggest to the provinces which have trouble understanding the situation, to exert at least tolerance, fairness and understanding towards French-speaking or English-speaking Canadians.

This means that steps must be taken so that all Canadians may be fully respected