

ing as it has over the past 110 years, is destroyed by factions, dissension and disputes between the provinces and the federal government, and between our two major language groups.

I would like for the last few minutes of the time I have available to me to say two or three things about the present crisis in our country, which is symbolized by the vote that will take place on May 20 on the Quebec referendum. Undoubtedly these are testing times for our country. There is perhaps one advantage to that testing, and it is that it proves the soul and character of a country. The advantage of the referendum is that it may bring to a head concerns of Canadians, Francophones or Anglophones, to determine once and for all the question of what kind of Canada they wish to have and whether that Canada can survive.

I believe that we must bring those issues to a speedy resolution. The rest of the world will not stand by and wait for us to manage the re-making of our constitutional arrangements, and Canada cannot afford to be so obsessed with these issues that it neglects its longer-term, urgent, economic and social needs.

We cannot afford as a country, I believe, to continue the kind of navel gazing, the obsession with our constitutional arrangements, that we have had for the past 17 years. In that regard, another 17 years like the past 17 will, I think, kill the country.

It is time, I believe, for a decision. Changes I think there must be in our constitutional arrangement, and changes I believe will take place. Those will be changes not simply of providing more powers to provincial governments, but also changes which will involve strengthening federal responsibilities in many areas. Whatever those changes, the essential quality and condition of the country will not change, and it is perhaps time we should say to Canadians, "What you see is what you get"; and what they see is a country with opportunities unrivalled by that of any other country in the twentieth century.

We have a chance with these opportunities not only to preserve or to hold on to the past, historic and rich though that may be, but the opportunities to build, not as in most countries simply to retain a heritage, but to construct a new society and a new way of living together.

The result of the referendum will not in itself resolve these issues. It will be the end of a stage. The next stage will involve, I believe, much more than has this first stage, the views of Anglophones and Francophones outside Quebec as much as those within it.

Whatever happens in the referendum, I believe our message to the Francophones of Quebec must be that we believe passionately in this country; we believe in it with a Quebec and the contribution of the Quebec people to that country. We believe in that for selfish reasons, because for us that makes more rich the diversity of our society. We believe in it also because we believe it is in the interest of Quebeckers to live within a society of 23 million people which is concerned to protect their language and culture; not simply for its survival, but that it may grow and thrive. The interests of Quebeckers,

The Address—Mr. Ittinuar

their language and their culture are better protected in that kind of Canada than they will be in an isolated Quebec Francophone state of 5.5 million people surrounded by a sea of 250 million Anglophones on this continent.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, if there is one message I would like to convey to my Quebec and Francophone fellow citizens, this is it: we believe passionately in this country and we want to build it with them. This country has very important historical roots, that is recognized. But it is its future that is really appealing, what we can do together if we want to, because Canada offers more opportunities, more possibilities than any other country in the world.

We therefore want to see Quebec and the Francophones within our confederation, to make our society richer and more varied. But we feel as well that it is in the interest of the Francophones of Quebec to be part of that great country of 23 million inhabitants, a country that is willing to accept as its first objective, not only the survival of the French language, the French culture in Canada, but also the flourishing of the French culture and language in our country. That is our message. It is not only for our sake that we want to pursue the great adventure launched over two centuries ago, but also for the sake of Quebeckers, that their interests be better protected within a society like ours, within a large and strong Canada that offers better protection than an insular country, a small island of five and a half million lost in an Anglophone sea of 250 million people. History, the past, our roots, they are very important, true; what is more important for Canada is the future we can build together. The future is Canada.

● (1550)

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Ittinuar (Nunatsiaq): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of northerners, I welcome this opportunity to reply to the Speech from the Throne. There was very little in the Speech from the Throne about the north which one could agree with or disagree with, because in fact there was very little said about the north at all. The one reference to the Canadian Arctic region refers to the exploration and development of these promising frontier areas. The people who make their home up there are forewarned.

I mention this situation because it is an ongoing problem with which northerners are constantly faced. The national media have little interest in northern affairs, and consequently southern Canadians are afforded few opportunities to learn about and understand a large portion of their country. In the Speech from the Throne pains were taken to address the people of Quebec, western Canada, the Atlantic provinces and the industrialized Ontario core. We sympathize with these regions, but the federal government is the one institution which effectively controls northern affairs.