

energy crisis afflicts the people of the maritime provinces, then all Canadians, wherever they live, must be concerned.

We are, of course, honourable senators, well served by our distinguished Speaker. She has led us through very productive years, and we look forward to working with her again during this session. We are also served superbly by the Senate officials and staff. I know that we all join in thanking them, as well as those who work in the library, and other officials, for their unfailing assistance to all of us, wherever we sit in the house. We look forward to their continuing good work.

● (1450)

I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for his non-partisan speech this afternoon. He admonished me, I recall, for at times seeming to support the government with too much vigour. I am happy that the message got through to him, apparently, that I am supportive of the government's policies. Certainly, the message got through to us this afternoon that the Leader of the Opposition is indeed a Tory in the old blue Tory tradition. That colour was well chosen by the Conservative Party.

**Senator Flynn:** Better than red, anyway.

**Senator Perrault:** I made no accusation that the Leader of the Opposition was red—but he was very blue. We heard a dreary and lugubrious litany of Tory pessimism enunciated by the Leader of the Opposition. You see, one of the real keys to Liberal retention of governmental responsibility in this country is the fact that Canadians are inherently optimistic.

**Senator Flynn:** I would say they need to be.

**Senator Perrault:** For years our friends in the opposition have told us all the things that are wrong about Canada, but they seldom tell us what is right about this country. People like to be told that there is a great future for Canada, because Liberals believe that there is. I think that the opposition leader's speech, his kind of presentation, may have been intended as one of the opening guns this session in the opposition drive for governmental power in Canada.

**Senator Flynn:** You flatter me.

**Senator Perrault:** I am not saying anything about the calibre of the gun. I am saying it may have been a gun.

**Senator Greene:** A lousy peashooter.

**Senator Perrault:** It could have been intended as anything from a pop-gun to a cannon. However, it must make Canadians question again whether the governing of this great nation could be entrusted to such an inveterate band of pessimists. They are so gloomy; they are so negative. I do not think Canadians share the myopia of the esteemed Leader of the Opposition. The opposition seem to be concerned with picking over the dry and arid bones of past political controversy; going back into history and questioning what might have been instead of what can be. I think that this is the time for Canadians of all parties to look into the future, and see what kind of future can be carved.

The honourable Leader of the Opposition made some worthwhile suggestions, which I fully support, however. One is that efforts should be made to initiate more bills in this chamber. I think that during the last session we had almost 40 measures of one sort or another initiated in this chamber, and we made numerous amendments to the various bills that came before us. It was one of the more productive sessions in the history of the Senate. I agree with him that there is an increasingly important role for the Senate to play, especially during sessions featuring heavy legislative programs. The Senate can and should initiate many more measures. I will certainly convey to my colleagues in the government the support of the Leader of the Opposition in that regard, and every effort will be made to bring more proposed legislation to this chamber.

I believe, as well, that the Senate has an important role to play in the next few years in the matter of strengthening Canadian unity, understanding and reconciliation, and in the next few days I hope to discuss with the Leader of the Opposition how we may go about this task.

Few of us can be serene about the future of Canada, in view of the stresses and strains that have been placed on Confederation over recent months. I think that feeling is shared by many of us. I know it is easy to dismiss many of the attitudes in relation to language and culture, for example, as prejudice and bigotry. But so often people, wherever they live, with seemingly extreme and strange notions of what Canada is all about in 1976, those with narrow notions about language rights or cultural rights, or the pros and cons of entrenching language rights in the Constitution—questions of that kind—really suffer from a lack of information and lack of understanding. The worst possible thing for any of us to do is to dismiss them as mindless bigots; I believe that we have an immense task of education to perform.

I said this at the beginning of the last session, honourable senators, and I say it again. I think the Senate should remind itself of one of its great historical functions, which is to represent regional interests of Canadians here at the heart of government. Consideration should be given to a Senate committee on regional aspirations to meet Canadians in many of the small towns and villages and other population centres in the regions of Canada, and to prepare a report for the Canadian people and for our colleagues in Parliament—a report relating to the hopes, aspirations and problems of the Canadian people. I believe that would be a contribution to solidifying national unity, reconciliation and understanding. As I say, I hope we can have some useful discussions on this point in the next few days.

I come from a part of Canada where there are some misunderstandings about the issue of language and culture, but the remarkable thing is that young people in this country with access to bilingual training are beginning to understand what Canada is all about in 1976, that a nation with two languages is something unique and very special, and that bilingualism can be a very important treasure and gift. Many of those, whether they live in Quebec or English-speaking Canada, who say, "They are not going to ram English or