

*The Address—Mr. Balfour*

In 1883, Mr. Speaker, my grandfather came to Saskatchewan from Ontario as a 16-year old youth seeking opportunity, which he found in full measure. In the economic environment of western Canada today, it seems to me almost inevitable that his great-grandsons, my sons, will leave their native province simply because no such opportunity or challenge now exists. Our largest single employer is the provincial government, and we are confronted with what could become an insoluble dilemma, that of an ever increasing bureaucracy living in large measure on the tax revenue generated by an ever decreasing private sector.

But, Mr. Speaker, I submit that what lies at the root of western Canadian problems is the hinterland philosophy with which, in varying degrees, central Canada and the federal government has regarded the west since confederation. A need to purchase consumer and capital goods in a protected market, while selling its products in a free world market, is one basic manifestation of its economic dilemma. This alone has constituted a hidden tax on western Canadians for as long as wheat and minerals have been produced there, a hidden tax which has never been compensated by government revenue sharing because it has created for the private sector of industrial Canada a built-in advantage over the private sector of western Canada. By reducing the profitability of the agricultural and mineral industries of the west, it has retarded capital formation, discouraged investment by the banks and reduced the buoyancy of the west economically.

The west is not the victim of lack of resources or productivity or a lazy work force; it is a victim of federal government policies that have loaded the dice against it. Transportation cost policies, tax laws which inhibit western development, a Customs tariff system which exacerbates the farmers' cost of production dilemma, the centralized banking system, immigration laws which at present create no impetus for settling in the west, and a host of other instruments of federal authority are responsible for the situation.

The hard fact is, Mr. Speaker, that western Canada has existed under a system of economic colonialism to central Canada since confederation, and the time for change is long overdue.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Balfour:** I noted with interest the throne speech proposal to convene a conference of the governments of western Canada to study western economic opportunities. Such a conference could very well prove in the long term to be a constructive and productive step. But there are things that could be done and should be done immediately. Federal fiscal, monetary and spending policies should be designed and implemented to deal with a Canada which is composed of distinct and differing regions. Special tax exemptions should be considered for areas with high living costs, such as the north, the areas of western Canada and the Maritimes; and areas which do not contribute to inflationary pressures caused by rapid economic growth should be spared the pains of the battle against it. In short, we must design and implement policies which recognize the existence of differences of the various regions of Canada and which guarantee for these regions

a substantial degree of sovereignty and political and economic equality.

I notice, Mr. Speaker, that the government, in the throne speech, devotes much of its time to social policy, to policy which is presumably designed to assist Canadians who are less fortunate than the majority, namely, the elderly, those who are unemployed, those on welfare, those who are living with conditions that are less than satisfactory.

I also notice that the throne speech fails to devote even a single sentence to the plight of Canada's native peoples. Perhaps this government would prefer not to remind itself or the rest of Canada about its total lack of concern for this sector of Canadian society which has an unemployment rate of about 90 per cent, a sector of Canadian society of which 70 per cent, in 1969, lived below the poverty line, a sector of Canadian society in which the high school drop-out rate reaches 95 per cent before grade 12, a sector of Canadian society which has, apparently, been forgotten by this government.

Mr. Speaker, there are approximately 3,000 registered Canadian Indians living in my riding. They occupy a total of eight reservations. In addition to this, there is in the city of Regina a substantial number of Indian and Métis people who have left the reservations and small rural communities seeking, presumably, greater opportunity. They, however, do not find greater opportunity. They find, usually because of lack of education, that opportunities for advancement are limited and they end up living in ghetto-like surroundings which are totally abysmal.

Under the terms of the Indian Act, registered Canadian Indians are the direct responsibility of the federal government. This government has abdicated that responsibility, because native peoples still suffer from inadequate housing and educational facilities, and poor health care. Native peoples living in Canada are still treated as second-class citizens and the government of Canada, instead of helping Indians to help themselves, is content to proceed with its narrow, legalistic policy of assimilation of native peoples into white society. Now we discover that the government is planning to phase-out funding for native organizations, in particular the core funding concept.

It appears as if the federal government expects that Indian associations will be able to correct all previous wrongs, grievances and injustices against Indian people and advance their standard of living to the point where they are no longer necessary within a period of less than 40 months. But, of course, this is the same government that has provided one school since 1968. It is the same government that has provided absolutely nothing in the way of new health care and educational concepts since 1968. It is the same government which chose to disregard the views of the Indian people in its 1969 Indian policy, and continues to ignore them in its 1973 Speech from the Throne. Canada's native peoples, Mr. Speaker, are not asking for the impossible. They only seek more control over their own affairs.

• (1740)

However, the biggest problems facing Canadians, whether they be from the west or the east, are unemployment and inflation—unemployment which affected 615,-