

The Address—Mr. Fortin

again. But in all the discussion which will take place on the hustings in connection with this question of a health plan we must bear in mind, I am convinced, that a royal commission on that subject is not needed. All that is needed is for the government at the federal level to achieve the degree of sincerity necessary to say that it intends to amend the Hospital Insurance and Diagnostic Services Act so as to provide for participation in an improved plan, coverage to include medical, dental, optical care and the like.

I know there will be a great many promises made, and if the experience of four or five years ago can be taken as a guide we are likely to see the Prime Minister operating in accordance with some Machiavellian principle of promising things year after year and only putting them into effect when he really has to—

Mr. Pallett: That is altogether wrong.

Mr. Howard: No doubt we will see the Prime Minister waving reports and documents around and saying to the people: Just re-elect me, and all this is just around the corner. I can hear his voice quavering now.

(Translation):

Mr. Louis Fortin (Montmagny-L'Islet): Mr. Speaker, the debate on the address in reply to the speech from the throne affords the members an opportunity to express their personal opinions and those of their constituents on the widest range of matters. So, I had the widest choice but I thought I should, as the member for a riding in the province of Quebec, deal with a problem of concern not only to the people of my province but to everyone in this country of ours. The separatist movement gained new strength during the fall and experienced, as a result, a growing popularity. The popularity of the movement remains at such a high level that I feel it is useful, and even essential, to analyse briefly the cause that gave birth to it.

Mr. Speaker, the movement is not new. It is the logical and natural consequence of that movement which, at the end of the last century, had a certain strength and remained dormant during the years to experience a renewal of vitality at more or less close intervals and, particularly, during the years that immediately preceded the second world war.

Even if that movement is not new, it still has its value; all the more so since the cause which gave it birth in the past is still very much with us today, although the situation

[Mr. Howard.]

has improved considerably in the last few years. That cause is the discontent, which is quite often justified, felt by my fellow French Canadians not only in the province of Quebec but throughout Canada.

Out of respect for the justice of that cause, I do not condemn as a whole the separatists who have undertaken a difficult, efficient and useful task, but I am not in agreement with them when they advocate the separation of the province of Quebec from the rest of Canada, because I feel that this ideal is illusory.

Personally, I am truly and deeply convinced that the movement will not achieve its aim, but it will at least have the merit of opening the eyes of my fellow French Canadians to their most sacred rights and those of my fellow English Canadians to their lack of comprehension towards us.

A great uneasiness exists—that fact must be admitted, unless one is blind or dishonest—in the Canadian confederation. Numerous are French Canadians who feel that they are in a strait-jacket. They breathe with difficulty and they feel that they are suffocating. In the province of Quebec, our fellow citizens of English origin and speech, enjoy privileges and advantages which are systematically refused to French Canadians residing in one of the other provinces of Canada. Indeed, when a French Canadian from Quebec, travels to another province and though he is still in his own country, i.e. Canada, he feels like a foreigner and is often much too often made to feel he is a foreigner. In other words, outside his own territory, the French Canadian is just tolerated, and he has the feeling of being the "Errant Canadian" of the well known poem and song.

Why such an anomalous situation? When the Canadian constitution was signed, that is the British North America Act, the terms of that act were thought out, worked out, and duly weighed by the fathers of confederation. French Canadians at the time understood that it was a friendship pact between the two great races which prevailed in Canada. After living under a constitutional rule which to them was unbearable, French Canadians welcomed with joy a new way of life which would place them on equal footing with their fellow citizens of Upper Canada. I say that French Canadian at present consider, and that they have always considered, the confederative pact as a pact of friendship, and I hope that the other Canadians, whatever their origin may be, look at it the same way.