

ADDRESS BY

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OF THE

CANADIAN LABOUR CONGRESS

TO THE

CANADIAN CLUB

"CANADA AT THE CROSSROADS"

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CANADA AT THE CROSSROADS

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE CANADIAN CLUB FOR ITS INVITATION TO BE TODAY'S LUNCHEON SPEAKER. IT IS NOT EVERY DAY THAT I AM AFFORDED THE OPPORTUNITY OF PRESSING MY VIEWS, AS PRESIDENT OF THE CANADIAN LABOUR CONGRESS, ON AN AUDIENCE MADE UP BY AND LARGE OF THE FINANCIAL COMMUNITY. THIS OPPORTUNITY COULD NOT HAVE COME AT A MORE PROPITIOUS TIME HOWEVER, FOR CANADA STANDS AT THE CROSSROADS. WE HAVE A DATE WITH DESTINY. AS CANADIANS WE MUST DECIDE ON THE FUTURE OF THIS COUNTRY. THE COURSE OF ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL EVENTS OF THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS HAS PROPELLED US TO A POINT WHERE THE INSTITUTIONS OF THE PAST ARE UNDER ATTACK. THE MOOD OF THE MAN-ON-THE STREET; THE BUSINESSMAN IN HIS CORPORATE BOARDROOM; THE WORKER IN THE PLANT; AND THE POLITICIAN IN THE PARLIAMENTS OF THIS LAND IS ONE OF TERRIBLE UNCERTAINTY. CANADA AS A NATION IS FLOUNDERING WITH NO SENSE OF NATIONAL PURPOSE OR DIRECTION.

A COMBINATION OF EVENTS HAS WROUGHT A TREMENDOUS CHANGE FROM THE OVERCONFIDENCE OF THE 1950'S AND MID 60'S WHEN CANADIANS BELIEVED THAT THEY WERE WELL INSULATED FROM UNEMPLOYMENT AND INFLATION. OUR FUTURE SEEMED SECURE. INFLATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT DIDN'T SEEM TO HOLD ANY DANGER FOR US. THESE WERE FOREIGN DISEASES WHICH COULD NEVER AFFLICT CANADA. WE BELIEVED THAT CANADA WAS IMMUNE FROM INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC FORCES AND THAT OUR NATURAL RESOURCES WOULD SHIELD US. THE CONGRESS WARNED THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TIME AFTER TIME THAT THE LONG TERM PROSPECTS

FOR THE ECONOMY WERE NOT GOOD. IN 1974 I FOREWARNED THE GOVERNMENT THAT IF INFLATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT CONTINUED THE "SOCIAL FABRIC OF THIS COUNTRY WOULD BE TORN ASUNDER" AND "THAT THE THINGS WHICH CANADIANS HELD IN COMMON WOULD DISAPPEAR, AND WITH THEM WOULD GO THE ORDERLY AND FOR THE MOST PART PEACEFUL WAY IN WHICH CANADIANS CONDUCTED THEIR AFFAIRS". UNHAPPILY THIS PREDICTION HAS COME TRUE SO THAT TODAY CANADIAN SOCIETY IS CHARACTERIZED BY WARRING SOCIAL GROUPS, EACH POINTING AN ACCUSING FINGER AT THE OTHER FOR WHAT HAS COME TO PASS.

NEITHER DID THE GOVERNMENT NOR THE CANADIAN COMMUNITY, INCLUDING THE BUSINESS WORLD, LISTEN TO THE CONGRESS WHEN IT WARNED AGAINST ANY MOVE TO LEGISLATE A CONTROLS PROGRAMME. AGAIN WE STATED THAT CONTROLS BY THEIR VERY NATURE FORCE GROUPS TO TAKE HARD POSITIONS AND THAT ONCE YOU START DOWN THIS PATH THERE IS NO TURNING BACK. WE PREDICTED THAT CONTROLS WOULD CREATE ALL SORTS OF BOTTLENECKS IN THE ECONOMY; THAT HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT WOULD BE AN INEVITABLE BY-PRODUCT; THAT PRODUCTIVITY WOULD FALL; AND THAT INVESTMENT WOULD DECLINE. THE CONGRESS IS NOT PARTICULARLY HAPPY ABOUT THE ACCURACY OF ITS PREDICTIONS BECAUSE TOO MANY PEOPLE HAVE BEEN HURT IN SEEING THEM COME TRUE. UNLIKE THE POLITICIANS, THE LABOUR MOVEMENT DOES NOT BELIEVE IN PURSUING ANY COURSE OF ACTION TO GIVE THE APPEARANCE OF DOING SOMETHING ~ ANYTHING ~ NO MATTER WHAT THE CONSEQUENCES, JUST SO LONG AS IT GIVES THE ILLUSION OF DECISIVE ACTION. CONTROLS IN CANADA WERE INVOKED BY A GOVERNMENT

THAT WAS DIVIDED ON THE QUESTION AND BY A BUREAUCRACY THAT BELIEVED IT COULD MAKE THEM WORK WHERE OTHER NATIONS HAD FAILED.

CONTROLS HAVE CALLED INTO QUESTION THE VERY NATURE OF OUR INSTITUTIONS AND THE WAY IN WHICH WE AS CANADIANS CONDUCT OUR AFFAIRS. THEY HAVE RAISED FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR CONCEPT AND UNDERSTANDING OF PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY AND RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT; THE ROLE OF THE BUREAUCRACY; AND OF HOW THE INSTITUTIONS OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR RELATE TO ONE ANOTHER AND TO GOVERNMENT. THE PRESENT DISCUSSIONS SWIRLING AROUND THE ISSUE OF DECONTROLS HIGHLIGHTS THESE IMPORTANT ISSUES. WITHIN THE CONGRESS WE HAVE DEBATED, DISCUSSED AND PURSUED THESE PROBLEMS EVER SINCE THE CONTROLS CAME INTO FORCE IN OCTOBER 1975. WE UNDERSTOOD VERY WELL AT THAT TIME THAT EVENTUALLY CANADA WOULD BE CAUGHT UP IN THIS DEBATE. OUR MANIFESTO, PASSED AT THE MAY 1976 CONVENTION SETS OUT THE CONGRESS' POLICY POSITION ON THE FUTURE DIRECTION IN WHICH THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT BELIEVES CANADIAN SOCIETY SHOULD TAKE.

YOU MAY THINK IT PRESUMPTUOUS OF THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT TO PASS POLICIES OF SUCH A FUNDAMENTAL NATURE, BUT WE TAKE THE POSITION THAT MAJOR INSTITUTIONS HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO SET THEIR MINDS AND RESOURCES TO WORK AT FINDING SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS WHICH BESET US AS A NATION.

THE CONGRESS HAS CONCLUDED THAT THE CONFRONTATION AND THE DESTRUCTIVENESS MUST COME TO AN END. IT BELIEVES THAT THE ENERGIES OF ALL GROUPS MUST BE HARNESSSED IN A CONCERTED AND CONSTRUCTIVE MANNER

SO THAT EACH CANADIAN CAN REALIZE HIS OR HER FULL POTENTIAL, HOW TO DO IT - THAT IS THE QUESTION?

WHAT THE CONGRESS HAS PROPOSED TO THE GOVERNMENT AND TO CANADA IS A NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PLANNING IN WHICH THE TWO PARTNERS IN INDUSTRY - LABOUR AND MANAGEMENT - CAN MEET TO DISCUSS AND DEBATE THE MAJOR ISSUES WHICH CONFRONT THEM, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE INVITED TO SIT IN, EITHER IN AN OBSERVER CAPACITY OR TO CHAIR THE MEETINGS. THE COUNCIL WOULD BE MAINLY ADVISORY AND CONSULTATIVE IN NATURE WITH AN INDEPENDENT RESEARCH GROUP ATTACHED TO IT AND UNDER ITS DIRECTION. THIS WOULD GUARANTEE THAT THE COUNCIL WOULD HAVE A LIFE OF ITS OWN AND WOULD NOT BE CAPTIVE TO THE MASSIVE FLOW OF GOVERNMENT STATISTICS AND INFORMATION ONLY.

THIS MAY NOT APPEAR TO BE A VERY DRASTIC PROPOSAL, BUT IF YOU PAUSE TO THINK ABOUT IT, IT DOES HAVE A FAR REACHING IMPACT IN TERMS OF LABOUR AND BUSINESS AS NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND THE INSTITUTION AND DECISION MAKING PROCESS OF GOVERNMENT.

THE FIRST AND PERHAPS MOST OBVIOUS POINT IS WHO REPRESENTS BUSINESS? WHAT GROUP SPEAKS FOR ALL OF BUSINESS? THE ANSWER, AS WE BOTH KNOW, IS THAT NO GROUP OR INDIVIDUAL IN CANADA CAN AT THE PRESENT TIME, SPEAK FOR THE WHOLE OF THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY. AND YET, IF THERE IS NO NATIONAL FORUM REPRESENTATIVE OF LABOUR AND BUSINESS, THE POSSIBILITY OF COMING TO GRIPS WITH OUR ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES WILL REMAIN FOREVER BEYOND CANADA'S GRASP. FOR THE FAILURE OF BUSINESS TO COME TO GRIPS WITH THIS FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION CAN ONLY LEAD, IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, TO MORE CONFRONTATION RESULTING IN FURTHER ECONOMIC STAGNATION.

THE GOVERNMENT HAS SO FAR BEEN RELUCTANT TO CALL LABOUR AND BUSINESS TO THE SAME NATIONAL TABLE IN DISCUSSIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN GOING ON SINCE THE ABORTIVE ATTEMPTS AT CONSENSUS BEGUN IN JANUARY 1975 BY THEN FINANCE MINISTER TURNER. HOW A CONSENSUS OR ANY AGREEMENT CAN BE REACHED AT ALL WHEN THE PARTIES ARE NEVER BROUGHT TOGETHER IS BEYOND MY ABILITY TO COMPREHEND. AS THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONGRESS, I CAN ONLY CONCLUDE THAT THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT SEE IT TO BE IN ITS BEST INTERESTS TO GET LABOUR AND MANAGEMENT TOGETHER, FOR BY KEEPING THEM APART IT IS FREE TO PURSUE ITS OWN POLITICAL ENDS.

ONE OF THE BIGGEST OBSTACLES TO A NATIONAL FORUM IS THE FEDERAL BUREAUCRACY WHICH IS JEALOUS OF THE POWERS AND INFLUENCE IT EXERTS OVER PARLIAMENT AND MINISTERS. THE BUREAUCRACY UNDERSTANDS VERY WELL THAT A NATIONAL FORUM OF LABOUR AND BUSINESS WOULD REPRESENT A THREAT TO ITS POSITION OF PRIVILEGE WITHIN THE PARLIAMENTARY STRUCTURE. FOR SUCH A FORUM WOULD OFFER AN ALTERNATIVE IN TERMS OF POLICY AND DIRECTION TO THE GOVERNMENT. THE BUREAUCRACY HAS DONE MORE TO UNDERMINE THE POWERS OF PARLIAMENT THAN ANY OTHER GROUP, FOR PARLIAMENT AND MINISTERS HAVE BECOME CAPTIVE TO IT.

THERE ARE MAJOR DIFFERENCES WHICH SEPARATE LABOUR AND MANAGEMENT, BUT EVENTUALLY THESE MUST BE DEALT WITH. THE LONGER WE DELAY THE GREATER WILL BECOME THE ISSUES WHEN WE FINALLY DO COME TOGETHER. IT TOOK A CRISIS IN GERMANY, SWEDEN AND GREAT BRITAIN BEFORE CONSTRUCTIVE ACTION WAS TAKEN. MUST WE WAIT UNTIL THE ECONOMY OF THIS COUNTRY LIES IN RUINS AROUND OUR FEET? OR DO WE HAVE THE CAPACITY TO MEET THE CHALLENGE NOW?

THE TASK WILL BE LONG AND DIFFICULT BUT THE FUTURE OF THIS COUNTRY; THE NATURE OF OUR INSTITUTIONS AND THE WAY IN WHICH DECISIONS ARE MADE ARE TOO IMPORTANT TO BE LEFT TO THE GOVERNMENT TO DECIDE FOR US. TO THE PRESENT TIME HOWEVER I HAVE NOT HEARD WHERE THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY STANDS IN THIS DEBATE. WHAT DOES IT WANT? WHAT IS IT PREPARED TO DO? OR IS IT CONTENT TO STICK WITH THE STATUS QUO? IF IT IS, THEN AGAIN I CAN ONLY OBSERVE THAT FURTHER DECLINE IS INEVITABLE.

IN THIS RESPECT THE CONGRESS IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE WAY THE PRESENT DEBATE ABOUT DECONTROLS HAS DEGENERATED INTO AN ATTACK ON WAGE EARNERS AND WORKING PEOPLE. ALMOST DAILY THE PRESS AND THE MEDIA CARRY STATEMENTS MADE BY BUSINESS LEADERS, POLITICIANS AND OTHERS CALLING FOR CONTINUED CONTROLS ON PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO AVOID A WAGE EXPLOSION; RESTRICTING THE RIGHT TO STRIKE; OR CUTTING BACK ON SOCIAL SERVICES WHICH ARE INDIRECT WAGES TO WORKING CANADIANS; WHILE AT THE SAME TIME LEAVING PRIVATE INDUSTRY FREE TO PURSUE PROFITS AND INCREASE PRICES. THE CHARGE IS LEVELLED ABOUT HOW WE ARE PRICING OURSELVES OUT OF WORLD MARKETS AND THAT THE SOLE REASON FOR THIS IS SUPPOSEDLY EXCESSIVE WAGE GAINS AND LOW PRODUCTIVITY AND THAT WAGES MUST THEREFORE BE RESTRAINED. THE DEBATE IS BRINGING OUT ALL THE OLD PREJUDICES AND ARGUMENTS WHILE OFFERING LITTLE IN THE WAY OF CONSTRUCTIVE ALTERNATIVES. THIS SUGGESTS TO ME THAT THERE ARE MANY IN CANADA WHO HAVE: 1) LEARNED LITTLE FROM PAST EXPERIENCE; 2) ARE NOT PREPARED TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT; OR 3) ARE CONTENT TO PURSUE THEIR SELFISH INTERESTS WHATEVER THE PRICE.

IN THE LONG RUN THIS WILL INEVITABLY PLAY INTO THE HANDS OF THE BUREAUCRACY AND THE GOVERNMENT WHICH WILL CONTINUE TO SAY THAT THEY MUST INTERVENE AND IMPOSE SOLUTIONS IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST BECAUSE THE TWO MAJOR INDUSTRIAL GROUPS CANNOT GET TOGETHER. THE CONTROLS PROGRAMME IS THE MOST RECENT EXAMPLE OF WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT IS LEFT TO ITS OWN DEVICES, CANADIANS HAVE COME TO EXPECT GOVERNMENT TO SOLVE ALL THEILLS OF SOCIETY. WE HAVE BEEN CAUGHT UP IN A TIDE OF RISING EXPECTATIONS WHICH WE HAVE, BY AND LARGE, LOOKED TO GOVERNMENT TO FULFILL. BY LEAVING EVERYTHING TO GOVERNMENT WE HAVE ABDICATED OUR RESPONSIBILITIES AND LEFT THE DOOR OPEN FOR A GREAT DEAL OF HARM AND MISCHIEF TO BE DONE BY THOSE IN GOVERNMENT WHO HAVE LITTLE REAL KNOWLEDGE OF HOW THE INDUSTRIAL WORLD WORKS.

LET ME MAKE IT ABUNDANTLY CLEAR HOWEVER THAT GOVERNMENT AND ITS LEGISLATIVE POWERS, IF USED PROPERLY, DO NOT NECESSARILY RESTRICT AND HAMPER INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE FREEDOM. SOCIAL LEGISLATION WHICH PROTECTS PEOPLE FROM THE FEAR OF WANT AND POVERTY EXPANDS INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM WHILE ADDING A NOBLE DIMENSION TO THE HUMAN CHARACTER THAT WOULD OTHERWISE BE ABSENT.

WHAT I AM SAYING IS THAT GOVERNMENT ALONE DOES NOT HAVE THE RESOURCES AT ITS COMMAND TO DEAL WITH OUR ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. MONETARY AND FISCAL POLICY IN THE GOVERNMENT'S VIEW WAS INCAPABLE OF DEALING WITH HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT AND HIGH INFLATION AND AS A RESULT CANADA HAD ITS FIRST PEACETIME INCOMES POLICY IN THE FORM OF CONTROLS.

THERE IS NO GOOD REASON FOR BELIEVING THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL NOT CONTINUE TO USE AN INCOMES POLICY TO SUPPLEMENT MONETARY AND FISCAL POLICY. AS I STATED PREVIOUSLY, ONCE YOU START DOWN THE ROAD OF CONTROLS THERE IS NO TURNING BACK. THE FUTURE FOR CANADA IS NOT DECONTROLS, BUT WHAT FORM THE NEW CONTROLS WILL TAKE.

WILL THEY BE IMPOSED OR CAN LABOUR AND MANAGEMENT REACH AN ACCOMMODATION ON SHORT TERM OBJECTIVES WHILE LEAVING LONGER TERM GOALS FOR CONTINUING STUDY, DIALOGUE AND NEGOTIATION? IN THE LONG RUN THERE IS REALLY LITTLE CHOICE BUT FOR LABOUR AND BUSINESS TO COME TOGETHER IN A NATIONAL COUNCIL. IF WE ARE INCAPABLE OF DOING THIS, THEN THE FUTURE FOR CANADA LOOKS GRIM INDEED; FOR GOVERNMENT WILL ASSUME GREATER AND GREATER CONTROL OVER ALL ASPECTS OF THE LIVES OF CANADIANS AND WE WILL SLOWLY DESCEND INTO AN AUTHORITARIAN ABYSS. THIS IS NOT THE KIND OF FUTURE THE CONGRESS FINDS APPEALING FOR CANADIANS. THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT HAS TAKEN UP THE CHALLENGE. THE QUESTION IS - WILL THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY RESPOND?

THE FUTURE OF A UNITED CANADA IS THE OTHER MAJOR CROSSROAD AT WHICH THIS NATION STANDS. NO OTHER ISSUE SINCE THE ELECTION OF THE PARTI QUEBECOIS HAS GRIPPED THE MINDS OF CANADIANS AS HAS THE QUESTION OF A SEPARATE QUEBEC. IN SOME QUARTERS THE DEBATE HAS BECOME CHARGED WITH EMOTIONALISM; IN OTHERS IT IS ONE OF QUIET RESIGNATION; WHILE STILL OTHERS ARGUE THAT QUEBEC IS NOT VIABLE ECONOMICALLY AS A SEPARATE NATION AND THAT THE COSTS OF SEPARATION WOULD BE TOO HIGH FOR BOTH CANADA AND QUEBEC. ALTHOUGH THE ECONOMICS OF SEPARATION IS AN IMPORTANT

PART OF THE DEBATE, IT IS BY NO MEANS ALL. THE APPEAL TO NATIONALISM IS AN EMOTIONAL ONE IN WHICH THE REPERCUSSIONS SEPARATION WOULD HAVE IN ECONOMIC TERMS IS NOT IMPORTANT. IF THERE IS NO NATIONAL WILL; IF THERE IS NO COMMITMENT TO CANADA; IF CANADIANS IN ALL REGIONS AND PROVINCES DEMONSTRATE A GREATER EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT TO THEIR LOCAL GEOGRAPHY THAN TO CANADA AS A UNITED NATION THEN ALL THE RATIONAL AND LOGICAL ARGUMENTATION WILL FAIL.

THE CANADIAN LABOUR CONGRESS HAS THUS FAR DECLINED TO ENTER THE DEBATE UNTIL THE FIRST WAVES OF HYSTERIA AND OVERREACTION HAVE SUBSIDED. THE CONGRESS IS COMMITTED TO A UNITED CANADA, BUT WE ALSO RECOGNIZE THAT CANADA AND THE WORLD IS A VASTLY DIFFERENT PLACE THAN IT WAS IN 1867. SINCE CONFEDERATION WE HAVE EXPANDED FROM FOUR PROVINCES TO TEN; FROM AN AGRICULTURAL TO AN INDUSTRIAL ECONOMY; FROM A WORLD WHERE TECHNOLOGY WAS IN ITS INFANCY TO ONE OF A HIGH TECHNOLOGICAL CAPACITY; FROM A WORLD OF ISOLATION TO ONE OF INTERDEPENDENCY INTERNATIONALLY AND DOMESTICALLY AND FROM A WORLD WHERE COMMUNICATIONS WERE DIFFICULT AND HAZARDOUS TO ONE OF INSTANT COMMUNICATIONS. ALL OF THESE DEVELOPMENTS HAVE OCCURRED IN THE LAST 50 YEARS AND WITH THESE TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS HAVE COME SOCIAL, CULTURAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL STRAINS. CANADA'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS HAVE NOT KEPT PACE WITH THE TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTION. AS A RESULT, QUEBEC AND QUEBECERS FEEL THREATENED BY A WORLD WHICH HAS SHOWN LITTLE SYMPATHY FOR THEM AND WHICH THREATENS TO ENGULF THEM.

THE MODERN CORPORATION BEARS LITTLE RESEMBLANCE TO ITS COUNTERPART OF THE 1920'S LET ALONE THE 1860'S. IT IS NO LONGER POSSIBLE FOR QUEBECERS TO HAVE THE SAME OPPORTUNITIES AS ENGLISH SPEAKING CANADIANS WITHIN A CORPORATE STRUCTURE WHICH SPANS CANADA AND THE GLOBE. IT IS ARBITRARY TO REQUIRE QUEBEC WORKERS TO SPEAK IN OTHER THAN THEIR NATIVE TONGUE IN THEIR PLACE OF WORK BECAUSE THEIR SUPERVISORS SPEAK ONLY ENGLISH. OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CORPORATE WORLD MUST BE OPENED UP TO ALL CANADIANS EQUALLY.

ON A SIMILAR BASIS, NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS SUCH AS THE ONE I REPRESENT MUST ALSO RE-EXAMINE THEMSELVES, FOR THEY ARE ONE OF THE MAJOR LINKAGE POINTS THAT TIE US TOGETHER. ALL NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS MUST REVIEW THEIR METHOD OF OPERATIONS, THEIR INTERNAL STRUCTURE AND THEIR LINES OF COMMUNICATIONS TO REMOVE RESTRICTIONS AND TO GUARANTEE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR QUEBECERS. CANADA'S INSTITUTIONS MUST ACTIVELY WORK TO DEMONSTRATE TO ALL THEIR MEMBERSHIP THAT WHAT WE SHARE IN COMMON IS GREATER THAN THOSE ISSUES WHICH APPEAR TO SEPARATE US. AND THAT WHERE THERE ARE DIFFERENCES THESE CAN BE OVERCOME THROUGH DIALOGUE; A WILLINGNESS TO UNDERSTAND AND A COMMITMENT TO CHANGE. THE APPROACH MUST BE CONSTRUCTIVE.

AS A MOVEMENT OUR GREATEST STRENGTH COMES FROM THE KNOWLEDGE THAT THERE IS A COMMUNITY OF INTEREST AMONG ALL WORKERS THROUGHOUT CANADA AND THE WORLD. THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION, OF WHICH CANADA IS A MEMBER, IS FOUNDED UPON THE PRINCIPLE THAT WORKERS THE WORLD OVER SHARE COMMON PROBLEMS. SIMILARLY, WORKERS

IN QUEBEC HAVE THE SAME GOALS, HOPES, FEARS AND ASPIRATIONS AS WORKERS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA, ALBERTA OR NEWFOUNDLAND. THE GREATEST STRENGTH OF THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IS THAT IT SHARES A COMMON IDEOLOGY STEMMING FROM THE EMPLOYER/EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIP. THERE IS NO BASIC DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A WORKER IN QUEBEC AND A WORKER ANYWHERE ELSE IN CANADA. HE SPEAKS A DIFFERENT LANGUAGE AND HE SPRINGS FROM A DIFFERENT CULTURE. BUT HIS PROBLEMS ARE BASICALLY ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL; ONE OF JOBS, SECURITY AND OPPORTUNITY.

BUT IN ORDER FOR QUEBECERS TO SECURE THESE RIGHTS IT MAY BE NECESSARY TO RENEGOTIATE THE TERMS OF CONFEDERATION TO REFLECT THE NEW REALITIES.

THE INESCAPABLE FACT IS THAT CANADA IS ENTERING UPON A NEW ERA WHICH WILL HAVE A PROFOUND IMPACT - THE FULL CONSEQUENCES OF WHICH ARE NOT YET CLEAR. AS CANADIANS WE ARE BESIEGED BY CHANGE ON ALL SIDES. THE OLD ORDER AND THE OLD WAYS OF CONDUCTING OUR AFFAIRS ARE BEING CHALLENGED FROM WITHIN AND WITHOUT. IT IS A TIME FOR STRENGTH, WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING. IT IS A TIME FOR SEEKING OUT THOSE FORCES WHICH DIVIDE RATHER THAN UNITE - WHICH EMPHASIZE DIFFERENCES RATHER THAN SIMILARITIES - FOR THEY ARE DESTRUCTIVE TO THE COMMON BOND.

ONE OF THE MOST DESTRUCTIVE AND DIVISIVE FORCES IN CANADA HISTORICALLY HAVE BEEN POLITICAL PARTIES. CONTRARY TO POPULAR BELIEF THE MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE NOT BEEN AGENTS OF NATIONAL UNITY.

SINCE THE 1911 ELECTION THE POLITICAL PARTY SYSTEM HAS INCREASINGLY BECOME LESS ABLE TO PUT TOGETHER AN ELECTORAL POLICY WHICH WOULD ELECT A PARTY WITH REPRESENTATION IN ALL PROVINCES AND REGIONS. POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE PROMOTED REGIONALISM AND HEIGHTENED THE ISSUES OF "REGIONAL DIFFERENCES". THEY HAVE FED UPON THESE DIFFERENCES IN THEIR SEARCH FOR POWER. IT IS NOT SURPRISING AT ELECTION TIME TO FIND THE MAJOR PARTIES - TORIES AND LIBERALS - SAYING DIFFERENT THINGS IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE COUNTRY. AS A RESULT NEITHER THE TORIES NOR THE LIBERALS ARE NATIONAL PARTIES IN TERMS OF REPRESENTATION. RATHER THEY ARE REGIONAL AND SECTIONAL WITH THE RESULT THAT TODAY WE ARE FACED WITH A SPLINTERING AND A FRACTURING OF CANADA. PRAGMATISM AND BROKERAGE POLITICS HAVE NOT SERVED CANADA WELL.

WHAT IS NEEDED ARE POLITICAL PARTIES WHICH WOULD APPEAL TO ALL REGIONS. AND THIS CAN ONLY BE DONE IF THEY HAVE A PHILOSOPHY AND PROGRAMME WHICH EMPHASIZES THE COMMON BOND WHICH EXISTS AMONG CANADIANS AND WHICH CUTS ACROSS REGIONAL DIFFERENCES. A PHILOSOPHY WHICH BINDS CANADIANS HORIZONTALLY; NOT ONE WHICH SEPARATES THEM VERTICALLY. THIS MEANS OF COURSE, A RESTRUCTURING OF POLITICAL PARTIES ALONG IDEOLOGICAL LINES WHICH WOULD OFFER REAL AND SUBSTANTIVE ALTERNATIVES STRESSING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES - NOT REGIONAL ONES. AS THE REAL WORLD REFLECTS THESE QUESTIONS SO OUGHT THE POLITICAL PARTY SYSTEM. AS SUCH, I SERIOUSLY QUESTION THE HISTORICAL AND FUTURE ROLE OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN THIS COUNTRY WHICH COMPETE FOR POWER BY EXPLOITING REGIONAL DISPARITIES.

THE COMING DEBATE AND SOUL SEARCHING ON SEPARATION WILL BE FAR-RANGING AND FAR-REACHING. IF WE PROCEED IN A CONSTRUCTIVE AND POSITIVE MANNER AND IF WE ARE WILLING TO MAKE THE NECESSARY ACCOMMODATIONS THEN CANADA AND CANADIANS CAN COME OUT AT THE OTHER END WITH A RENEWED SPIRIT AND SENSE OF COMMITMENT TO PURSUE OUR COMMON DESTINY AS ONE NATION,