

Rt. Hon. Kim Campbell

Notes for an address at the Progressive Conservative Brunch, Montreal, Quebec, August 22, 1993

Some of you may have been hoping that today I would speak about Lucien Bouchard's latest economic theories. But I have decided to spare him for the time being: after all, he is a man. I know Quebecers don't want to relive old battles; they prefer to build for the future. And there is no doubt in my mind that, come the next election, Canadians will support the team that stands for renewal, the team of the future.

Since June 25th, I have met thousands of Canadians individually -- in their homes, in their communities, in every province across the country. From my home province of British Columbia to Newfoundland, I have sensed the deep desire in Canadians of every age to get involved, to become part of our life as a nation, to have control of their own lives. And it is clear that a strong bond still exists between our Party and Quebecers.

Quebecers have rarely in their history been better represented than they are right now -- at the highest levels of the federal government. I am very pleased, on your behalf, to commend the excellent job they are already doing: Jean Charest, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Industry, Science and Technology, Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development for Quebec; Monique Landry, Canadian Heritage Minister designate, Secretary of State and Minister of Communications, and political minister for Quebec; Gilles Loiselle, Minister of Finance; Pierre Blais, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, and President of the Privy Council; Jean Corbeil, Minister of Transport; Pierre H. Vincent, Minister of the Environment; and Gerry Weiner, Minister of Multiculturalism and Citizenship. All these ministers are backed by a team of dynamic, dedicated MPs who will emerge from this weekend more determined than ever to represent the interests and aspirations of their fellow citizens with enthusiasm and dignity.

In the course of this weekend, I have also met with the new team of candidates who will represent the Party in Quebec in the next election. And I have some bad news for our opponents but good news for Quebecers: our candidates will all make excellent MPs. The ambition these men and women share is to improve the Canadian federation -- not paralyze it, as some propose to do. They want to contribute to the prosperity and security of Quebecers -- not jeopardize it. To suggest that Quebecers willingly give up the chance to exercise fully their influence within the federal government would be to betray the historical role Quebec has always played in Confederation, and to undermine the legitimacy of their pride and ambitions.

Progressive Conservative candidates from Quebec want to exert real power in Ottawa, not simply be content with playing a secondary role. For example, only strong, united representation from Quebec will enable us to work effectively on Montreal's economic recovery. We discussed it at length in yesterday's workshop on regional development, and all our MPs are very firmly committed to finding realistic solutions to a problem which affects the entire Quebec economy.

Personally, I am very deeply concerned about the position thousands of men and women here find themselves in every day because they are unable to achieve their full potential. For me, unemployment and poverty in the Greater Montreal area is not mainly a problem of structure, or design, or statistics. It is a profoundly human situation.

For over 20 years, the federal and provincial governments have made enormous efforts employing a variety of approaches in an attempt to stimulate Montreal's economy. Many of these measures have had very promising results in recent years. I am reminded in particular of the aviation and pharmaceutical industries, whose phenomenal growth is a direct result of initiatives taken by our government in cooperation with the government of Quebec. But many earlier attempts were much less fortunate and cost us very dearly -- in wasted resources, of course, but most of all in disappointed hopes.

In recent years the different levels of government, together with numerous institutions and agencies concerned about Montreal's development, have developed a variety of action plans based on their understanding of the root of the problem. We can already draw some conclusions from past experience which should guide our actions in the future. For example, we know that massive injections of public funds are neither possible nor desirable. And in all modesty, we must admit that governments are not always the best doctors when it comes to diagnosing economic ailments and prescribing the right treatment.

Government cannot and must not replace private initiative. Too often, governments have operated in a vacuum, believing they could come up with some magic formula to which they have an exclusive patent. But that has invariably resulted in scattered energies, structural overlapping and waste of taxpayers' dollars. Only concerted, sustained action by governments and everyone concerned can produce effects that will be felt over the intermediate and long term. Such action must also encompass every factor which will increase our competitive edge including, above all, the human factor.

On August 3rd, for example, Premier Bourassa and I reached an agreement in principle on labour training which agrees with the basic objective of my government to serve Canadians better by using our resources more judiciously. Premier McKenna and I have also agreed that a similar understanding could be established with New Brunswick. For me, rationalizing skills training is neither a political fetish nor a form of currency used between governments. Above all, it is the logical solution to a very real human problem. By making better use of the resources we devote to training, we will instill hope in Canadian men and women who ask nothing more than to live a life of dignity.

But it would be naive to imagine we have solved all our income security problems simply because the roles of the federal and provincial governments in the area of skills training have been clarified. We have to define and put into practice a better, more coherent and effective policy on income security. We can no longer afford to close our eyes to the anomalies and anachronisms that ultimately penalize the beneficiaries of our programs.

Governments allocate enormous resources for social programs. And it is true that for many years we have had one of the best social service systems in the world. Yet we are still incapable of meeting the needs of tens of thousands of Canadian families.

Another absurdity: despite our high rate of unemployment, 300,000 jobs go unfilled largely because many of the unemployed lack the skills needed today as a result of technological progress. Right here in Montreal, there are more people without jobs than in all the Maritime provinces combined. And in many cases, unfortunately, Montrealers are chronically unemployed because they have not had the opportunity to be trained for the types of jobs available. As Canadian citizens, we benefit from a system of social programs that is second to none. But we know that our system has let a lot of people down-that is has not adequately supported their efforts to become selfreliant and to participate in society to the best of their ability.

And the world has changed profoundly since our programs were first established. People's needs have changed dramatically here in Canada. For example, three major trends have changed the structure of our families: an increase in single-parent families; an increase in the participation of women in the labour force; and smaller family size. An increasing number of Canadians must juggle the demands of work with the need to care for children, or for family members who are ill or too frail to care for themselves. Our programs have simply not kept pace with these societal changes. And too often they are just not as efficient and effective as they could be.

The way we respond to this problem will define the kind of society that we are and that we want to become. Our present system obviously needs to be strengthened and modernized. We must build on those income security programs that have served Canadians so well since the 1960s, to ensure that we can meet the challenges of a new decade.

Canadians realize and expect that our income support programs should help prepare people for their futures, not just take care of immediate needs. The man from the east end of Montreal who has worked all his life on the line should not be forced to accept handouts when the plant closes. He should be given the chance to retrain or to start his own business. He should be given every opportunity to continue to contribute to the community that he probably has spent his life helping to build.

For too many, to work means having less income. For people on social assistance, the loss of free dental care, prescription drugs and subsidized housing can greatly outweigh additional income from working. We've all heard the stories. The mother on welfare with two children who simply sits at home on welfare and does nothing. The way some tell it, she has the world by the tail. But do we ever look further? If she tries to work, often in lowpaying or parttime jobs, she loses her benefits. And she may lose any chance of possibly getting into a training program. Taking the job, often at minimum wage, will cost her money.

This is happening right now. Here in Montreal, too many times. What we must do, of course, is reward, not penalize, effort and initiative. Any serious attempt to reform our new income security system must be a national endeavour. It must involve all levels of government, business, labour, voluntary organizations, clients of our programs and the professionals who serve them. But especially, it must involve and engage individual Canadians.

All of us, whether we work in the public or private sector, whether we are involved in education, the labour movement or community action, must collectively give serious thought to the issue of income security. Governments, the private sector, non-government organizations and individuals must join

forces to ensure that reform is comprehensive and generous, and that it meets today's needs and demands, and where possible, anticipates those of tomorrow.

Precisely because I am convinced of the absolute necessity of making a concerted effort, and realizing fully that urgent action is vital, the federal government will not embark unilaterally on a complete overhaul of income security programs. However, I intend soon to elaborate on how we might approach income security reform. I believe now is the time to launch a serious national dialogue on this issue. The new department of Human Resources has been structured to encourage this kind of initiative and to implement the resulting ideas and recommendations. Moreover, how much moral authority or credibility would a government have if it claimed to be revitalizing the national economy and reforming our social system but was incapable of governing itself rationally and efficiently? In my mind, none.

That is why, on the same day I was sworn in as Prime Minister of Canada, I announced the most sweeping reform ever undertaken in the structure of our federal government. In particular, we have reduced Cabinet to a more manageable size, which will facilitate decision making. We have also organized the departments around the issues about which people are most immediately concerned: jobs, health, public security and prosperity. I have always believed governments must adapt to the needs of the people, not the other way around. And it is not the responsibility of people to try and figure out how government works. Government has a duty to serve the public as efficiently, as simply, and as directly as possible.

About two weeks ago in Vancouver, I announced another series of sweeping reforms designed to empower the role of MPs and streamline government operations, while making them easier to understand and more accessible to every Canadian. For example, we plan to lift the veil of secrecy surrounding the preparation of the budget. We also plan to open up the process of government appointments. I have stated my intention as well of disclosing more details about what lobbyists do, tightening up the rules governing conflicts of interest, and looking into how politicians get paid.

I believe, basically, that Canadians respect the demanding and important work accomplished by their politicians. However, I do not think they necessarily want their MPs to begin collecting their pensions before they reach the age of 55, or let them indulge in doubledipping. Those practices will come to an end.

Even the best government reforms might only amount to tilting at windmills unless people share our desire for change. Our success as a country, the type of society we want to create for ourselves and our descendants, ultimately rests in the hands of the people of Canada. In recent years we learned, for example, that governments by themselves cannot realize some of their most fundamental responsibilities and noblest goals. For example, we now know that unity, the cornerstone of Canada's greatness and prosperity, is, above all, a matter of emotion and reason for every citizen.

We are on the verge of an election. I, for one, intend to conduct a campaign that will be both positive and forthright. I think we have had enough talk about what can divide us as a country, or even about what one member of our federation could possibly achieve on its own. The time has come to focus on what we can accomplish together.

Above all, this is not the time to try to block government initiative; rather, it is time to open up the future. We must see to it that Quebecers can develop their cultural and social security, as well as economic prosperity in the 1990s. And today, I ask all Quebecers to join me and support the instrument of change and progress represented by the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada. In particular, I appeal to that wonderful sense of solidarity which has enabled you to preserve and develop a culture and society on this continent that is unique in the world.

Whether you come from Port Alberni on the West Coast as I do, or from Port-Cartier on the shores of the St. Lawrence, we all share the rare privilege of being citizens of one of the greatest countries in the world. Together, with pride in our past, we will open wide the gateway to our future.