

RT. HONOURABLE JOHN DIFENBAKER (PRIME MINISTER)

Opening Campaign Speech, Winnipeg
February 12, 1958

OPPOSITION TACTICS

From day to day, Mr. St-Laurent said to us that he intended to give the government a chance. His followers devoted long periods to questions each day, and to political criticism. They spoke like lions; they voted like lambs.

Pearson said only a couple of weeks ago that an election is at hand. They ask now why there was an election.

I think I should now say a passing word regarding the Liberal Convention. We were challenged there over and over again. Then Mr. Pearson in his acceptance speech spoke of the dire fate that would come to the government -- "And soon ! ", "And soon ! "

Well, we held over the Supply Motion for a week so that it would be available to the Liberal party after the Convention to enable them to launch a motion of non-confidence. Then, ladies and gentlemen, came that immortal amendment, an amendment by which, instead of challenging the government to go to the people, they said to us, resign ! Make way for us, but don't have an election !

I don't know who fathered that resolution. One man couldn't have done it ! On the third day of the Convention, their leader raised a fighting standard, a standard of defiance. Four days later, translated into a motion in the House of Commons, that fighting standard became a banner with a strange device -- give us back our jobs !

"Give us back our jobs. But by-pass the people". Mr. Chairman, that might work in undemocratic countries, but not in Canada.

They said they had no confidence in us. The amendment showed they had no confidence in the people either.

I want to be fair. Such an amendment in the diplomatic world might have got by. But as a parliamentary manoeuvre it couldn't. They flashed the sword at the Convention. They returned it to the scabbard when they faced their opponents in the House of Commons: willing to wound, but not to strike.

(Over)

The CCF policy of attacking us was to achieve the same end. The members of the Liberal Party were afraid to move the votes of non-confidence, but the CCF was not afraid because it knew the Liberal Party wouldn't vote for them.

ELECTION CALLED

We called the election because it was called for.

Called for, by the need of a stable government to face the larger problems now facing Canada on a long-term basis. Called for, because the people of Canada as a whole realize that the possibility of a strong and effective government cannot be achieved without there being a majority. No government, and I underline this, no government can grapple with major problems requiring long-term planning while in a minority.

They say that I called an election because of fear, fear to face responsibilities. I don't believe that to trust the people is ever evidence of fear.

That's the attitude I take. I have no hesitation in asking the people of Canada on the basis of our record to date. Whatever else you may say, however you may disagree, you must believe this: that the promises I made on behalf of this party have been carried out today, and will be carried out.

They say, it is a bad time for an election because the government ceases when the election is on. Did it cease during the days of war in January, February and March in 1940? Did it cease in 1945 when the war was still on? They speak of governor-general's warrants. That is simply a means whereby the Cabinet, in order to meet the needs -- the emergent and urgent needs of the time -- asks the Governor-General to give his warrant. Mr. King operated on that plan in 1940.

I say this to you; that every dollar that is expended by this government until the 31st of March will be placed before the new Parliament, when it is called, for the fullest scrutiny and examination. I want to make that very clear.

CONSERVATIVE RECORD

What have we done in a few months?

I am going to set this out because I think you will judge the future by the past.

We started in the last few months, since June the 10th, to carry out our promises, and I can tell you this, that as long as I am Prime Minister of this country, the welfare of the average Canadian will not be forgotten.

National Development

We have laid the foundations for a National Development policy to equalize the economic opportunities of all the Provinces. We are now undertaking Projects across this nation to develop our Natural Resources.

External Trade

We have taken measures to restore our External Trade. In 1957 Canada's Exports were the greatest in our history.

Yes, the Liberal Party admits that the tremendous adverse balance of trade is dangerous to Canada's economy. When did it originate? What did they do about it? They sent notes.

But day before yesterday, the Liberal leader said, what we have to do is increase Canadian exports to the United States. Why didn't they do it then? That's the question.

We have undertaken a great policy to increase markets. We did what they said could not be done, convened a Commonwealth Trade and Economic Conference to meet in September in Canada, to extend our Markets through Multilateral trade with other parts of the Commonwealth. They said it couldn't be done.

Tight Money

We loosened up the Tight Money Policy of the previous government that strangled various industries in Canada. We provided \$300,000,000 for Building Loans for Lower-Cost Housing. And this Winter, an all-time high in Winter Home Construction, thereby providing Canadian citizens with an estimated 75,000 jobs.

(Over)

Lower Taxes

They said we couldn't reduce Taxes. That was back in June. February, now, they say differently.

We reduced the Income Tax for 4,500,000 taxpayers by \$146,000,000. We took 100,000 people in the lowest earning class off the rolls. We reduced the Excise Tax on Automobiles. This, all, since October 14th.

Agriculture

One of the major reasons of my being in public life was to do something on behalf of that major industry in Canada, Agriculture.

We provided Cash Advances on Farm-Stored Grain. When we tried to get that two or three years ago, Mr. Howe said -- and when he said it, that was final -- Mr. Howe said the Wheat Board would resign. They haven't resigned yet.

We brought in Legislation long sought by Farmers to stabilize Farm Prices, and to give prosperity by having prices each crop year based on a fair relationship to the cost of production.

As far as this legislation is concerned, it provides the details: An Advisory Board to be set up and now being set up, will recommend the prices for farm products on designated products, and regard will be had to the cost of production.

We have prevented the Canadian Farmers from being subject to the detrimental effects of Dumping of United States Farm Products into our country.

We brought in a Price Spreads Commission which will report to us, we believe, by the month of June, and as soon as it reports, we intend to assure that the Farmer will receive a maximum share of the price paid by the consumer.

Labour

We have extended the Supplementary Unemployment Insurance Benefits from 16 to 24 weeks.

All of us believe in Immigration. We began to realize in July, however, that unless something was done, on the basis of the information we had, the Unemployment situation might be worse.

We brought into being Annual Vacations with Pay for all workers.

We removed the Discrimination against Married Women.

We have given representation to Labour on all Government Boards and Commissions.

Unemployment

To provide for the future development of Canada and to ensure jobs, we have launched a nation-wide works projects for constructive works, for dividend-paying works, of \$1,185,000,000 of which \$270,000,000 will be spent in the first three months of this year.

On the other hand, those who criticize us today had the record before them in February last, that conditions in the United States and Canada pointed to a recession, that the bloom was off the boom, and that it was necessary to act.

Financial Aid to Provinces

We have provided Financial Assistance to the Provinces including Special Grants-in-Aid to the Maritime Provinces. We called together a Dominion-Provincial Conference.

In order to help the Provinces, as an Interim Measure, we decided to make available some \$62,000,000 over and above what they agreed to accept last year.

We have preserved the Equalization principles of Tax Rentals and will preserve that principle. I want to make that very clear at this time.

Pensions

We have increased Old Age Pensions, Old Age Assistance payments, payments to the Disabled Persons and Blind Pensions. You remember the treatment you got under the last government? I gave you a promise on behalf of this Party. That promise, as other promises, has been carried out.

For the Veterans, we increased Allowances for 60,000 veterans and Disability Pensions Benefits for 192,000.

Hospital Grants

We have provided Federal Grants for Hospital Construction being doubled.

(Over)

Social Security Study

As promised during the Campaign last year, I have authorized through the Government an outstanding Canadian Economist to examine and give full consideration to the Insurance System in the United States, over and above anything that we have today. And listen to what it does:

Under the American plan a person receives Payments at the age of 65 years or later. Disability benefits at 50, for which there is no Means Test. On an Average Income a person receives at that time from \$88.50 to \$98.50 per month. The monthly Retirement for a husband and wife over 65 is \$132.80 per month. If one dies \$66.40 is still paid to the survivor -- if a widow, with two children, \$177.20. Death payments of \$265. The entire system is financed by contributions by Employers, Employees and the Self-Employed.

We want that report, within the next three months, so that we will be in a position on the basis thereof to have Parliament give consideration to the establishment of such a system over and above what we already have.

F U T U R E P L A N S F U T U R E P L A N S !

National Development

We intend to launch for the future, the long-range objectives of this party. We ask from you a Mandate: a new and a stronger Mandate, to pursue the planning and to carry to fruition our new National Development Programme for Canada.

This national Development Policy will create a new sense of National Purpose and National Destiny. One Canada ! One Canada, wherein Canadians will have preserved to them the control of their own economic and political destiny. Sir John A. Macdonald gave his life to this Party. He opened the West. He saw Canada from East to West. I see a new Canada--a Canada of the North. What are these new principles? What are our objectives? What do we propose?

Aid to the Provinces

We propose to assist the provinces, with their co-operation, in the financing and construction of job-creating projects necessary for the new development, where such projects are beyond the resources of the provinces. We will assist the provinces with their co-operation in the conservation of the renewable natural resources. We will aid in projects which are self-liquidating.

Northern Development

We will aid in projects which, while not self-liquidating will lead to the development of the national resources for the opening of Canada's Northland. We will open that Northland for development by improving Transportation and Communication and by the Development of Power, by the Building of Access Roads. We will make an Inventory of our Hydro-Electric potential.

"Canada First"

We now intend to bring in legislation to encourage progressively increasing processing of our domestic Raw Materials in Canada, rather than Shipping them out in Raw Material form.

We will ensure that Canada's National Resources are used to benefit Canadians and that Canadians have an opportunity to participate in Canada's Development. We have not discouraged Foreign Investment, but we will encourage the partnership of the Foreign Investors with the Canadian people.

Taxation adjustments to place Canadians on a more equal footing with Foreign Investors. Encourage Foreign Investors to make Equity Stock available to Canadians for purchase, to appoint Canadians to Executive positions, to deny the present plan of certain American Companies that do not give to Canadian Plants their fair share of the Export business. Those are some of the things we want to do.

We will maintain Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic. We will develop Canada's Hydro-Electric powers in International rivers.

Public Works for National Development

We have launched that Programme I mentioned a moment ago, that National Programme of Public Works designed to effect National Development. We have already started on this Programme. We secured Parliamentary approval for the assistance of the Beechwood Hydro-Electric project in the Maritimes, because they are behind, economically there through a lack of Hydro-Electric Power. We provided a Thermal-Electric Programme for the Atlantic Provinces. I believe that negotiations are not far away for the commencement of the South Saskatchewan Dam. We are negotiating for a Joint Federal-Provincial Forest Access roads programme. I think of a vast programme on Frobisher Bay on Baffin Island in the Canadian Arctic, hiding resources that Canadians have little realization of. We intend to start a vast Roads Programme for the Yukon and Northwest Territories which will open up for exploration vast new Oil and Mineral areas, 30,000,000 acres, I believe, is the area. We will also launch the \$75,000,000 Joint Federal-Provincial Programme to build Access Roads. This is the vision.

(Over)

Small Business

We will establish a Business Advisory Committee. We know the position of Small Business in this Country, the backbone of our business, suffering as no other business has suffered by the Liberal Party's Tight Money Policy. We will set up a Business Advisory Committee to prepare material to assist the Small Businessman to find the type of Government business he can participate in, and in addition to that, a Programme of Financial assistance to enable the Expansion of Small Business and the provision of jobs.

"A New Vision"

Canadians, realize your opportunities ! This is only the beginning. The future Programme for the next five to seven years under a Progressive Conservative Government is one that is calculated to give young Canadians, motivated by a desire to serve, a lift in the heart, Faith in Canada's Future, Faith in her Destiny. We will extend aid to economically sound Railway Projects, such as the Pine Point Railroad to Great Slave Lake.

We will press for Hydro-Electric development of the Columbia River, which now awaits completion of an agreement with the United States.

We're going to call a National Convention on Conservation to map a National Conservation policy to extend the principles of farm rehabilitation to all Canada, to maintain a continuing study of soils and land use. We have under consideration a possible second Trans Canada Highway route.

There is a new imagination now. The Arctic. We intend to carry out the Legislative Programme of Arctic research, to develop Arctic routes, to develop those vast hidden resources the last few years have revealed. Plans to improve the St. Lawrence and the Hudson Bay Route. Plans to increase Self-Government in the Yukon and Northwest Territories. We can see one or two Provinces there.

"One Canada".

This is the message I give to you my fellow Canadians - not one of defeatism - Jobs ! Jobs for hundreds of thousands of Canadian people. A new vision ! A new hope ! A new soul for Canada.

One Canada, ladies and gentlemen, that's my message. And what will this mean to Canada? It will mean the creation of equal opportunities for all Canadians. I am not unmindful of those who are unemployed. The Cabinet of which I have the honour to be the Prime Minister, will not fail those who are unemployed.

Completion of Confederation by developing a self-governing North. It will mean capital investment by Canadians and by foreign investors of many millions of dollars. It will assure to Canadians that renewable resources will be renewed.

A CLEAR MANDATE NECESSARY

It is for those things that I ask a Mandate. These are the reasons that I appeal to the Canadian people, a Mandate for a Clear Majority.

We need a Clear Majority to carry out this long-range plan, this great design, this blueprint for the Canada which her resources make possible.

I want to see Canadians given a transcending sense of national purpose, such as Macdonald gave in his day. To safeguard our independence, restore our unity, a policy that will scrupulously respect the rights of the Provinces, and at the same time build for the achievement of that one Canada, is the major reason why 35 of our 113 members in the House of Commons are sufficiently young to belong to the Young Progressive Conservatives. They caught that vision. I am here for the purpose, as a Canadian, to give you a picture of the kind of Canada the long range plans that we have in mind will bring about.

Liberal Platform

Last spring, common economic prudence would have dictated a balanced budget, an easing of tight money, the preparation of a shelf of public works. They knew the situation; they did nothing. They were warned by their officials. They were warned by the Opposition. I was told that my viewpoint in this regard was economic lunacy. Now they say, cut taxes. They continued in the course of high taxation, of budget surpluses and tight money having wrung the taxpayer dry, they suddenly become his champion. The Liberal party is now learning from us.

Yes, they become most promising pupils. What have they found? They have discovered the needs of the taxpayers ! Why didn't they, when in power?

They have discovered the needs of the farmers ! Why didn't they then?

They discovered the needs of the small businessmen. Why didn't they then?

They discovered the needs of municipalities. They discovered the Maritimes. Ladies and gentlemen, they have even discovered the North !

I summarize their programme. What was heresy to them in June, has become policy in February. Yes, what was heresy in June has become policy in February.

(Over)

The Conservative Party
"The Party of National Destiny"

This Party has become the Party of National Destiny. I hope it will be the party of vision and courage. The party of one Canada, with equal opportunities to all. The only party that can give to youth an Elizabethan sense of grand design--that's my challenge.

The faith to venture with enthusiasm to the frontiers of a nation; that faith, that assurance that will be provided with a government strong enough to implement plans for development.

To the young men and women of this nation I say, Canada is within your hands. Adventure. Adventure to the nations utmost bounds, to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield. The policies that will be placed before the people of Canada in this campaign will be ones that will ensure that today and this century will belong to Canada. The destination is one Canada. To that end I dedicate this party.

The election was called; it was called for. Last June the Canadian people voted for a change, but failed to give a workable majority. I want to say this party has become the vital symbol of the average Canadian. I am asking for your support, because these things can come true, these achievements will be attained. It has been said that if you attempt great things, you can achieve great things. Canada, one Canada. I ask your support.

We have done the things that have to be done immediately. We have lived up to our promises. We have not failed you. Day in and day out while the Liberals said they co-operated, they held us back. By multitudes of questions never equalled in all history before the business of the day.

"The Grand Blueprint"

My hope is that we make articulate the yearnings and the aspirations of the humblest of our people. To that purpose we are dedicated. And you, my fellow-Canadians, will require all the wisdom, all the faith, all the vision that is necessary for the building of that Canada.

We have shown you that we do not believe election promises are cream puffs. We have carried them out. We have proven true to the faith you have put in us. I ask for your support so that we can go together and build for the achievement of that Canada which without regard to party considerations is the aim and the purpose of Canadians. We have the plan, the grand blueprint that can be achieved if men and women, without regard to party considerations, will give us the opportunity to bring about the Canada that her resources make possible.