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Some Ground Rules For a Free Society

AN ADDRESS BY

Hon. E. C. Manning

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Hon. E. C. Manning

Good Evening, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Since this is our first telecast for 1966, may I wish for each and every one of you the very best for the New Year. May it be for you, and for our Province, and for our nation, the best and most constructive year we have ever known. This is a hope that can be realized if, individually and collectively, we apply ourselves intelligently to the things necessary to this wish coming true during the next twelve months.

With this in mind, and because this is the first program of the new year, I would like us to consider some of the ground rules which should guide our thinking and our planning and our actions as we face the responsibilities which are ours individually, and as citizens of this Province and nation. Let's not waste time talking about vague generalities, but get right down to definite issues. What do you individually, and as a family, and as the people of Alberta, want most for yourselves and for your Province? Sometime, take a few minutes and make up a list of the things that you would write down in answer to that question; and then ask yourself, are these the things that you should want? Are they the things that would prove to be in your best interests — in the interests of our Province and country as a whole? Then, after you are settled in your own mind on that point, ask yourself this next question. How do you believe these results can and should be attained? What do you think your government should do beyond what is now being done to help produce the results you want from the management of your public affairs? These are some of the definite questions to which we are seeking equally definite and constructive answers.

We want your help in providing them. I hope these weekly television discussions will assist to that end. You need only discuss these questions with your friends and neighbours to discover that many of the answers are far from clear, and often in conflict with the opinions of others. Let's see, then, if we can clarify our thinking by analysing these points one by one.

First, let's spell out, if we can, what we, as a people, want for ourselves and for our Province. I think you will agree that most people want to better their economic position and improve their standard of living. They want to attain social and economic security for themselves and for their families. They want to be able to assure their ambitions for themselves and their children, and I hope that most of us want to make some worthwhile contribution to the welfare of our community and our Province and our nation as a whole. To this end, we all want an opportunity to apply ourselves to the occupation or the profession or the vocation of our choice. Most of us want to be free to exercise our own judgment, to make our own decisions, to assume our own responsibilities. We don't want governments interfering in our lives, but we do want the support of the state to help us attain those things which are beyond the reach of most of us without such assistance from society as a whole. Doesn't this pretty well size up what you want, as a citizen of this country and this Province?

Let's look at our second question. How do you believe these desired results can and should be attained? Do you favour the wholly individualistic approach — that is, do you think that each of us should be left entirely on his own with the state taking no responsibilities whatever, whether we sink or swim? This concept is a relic of the

old "law of the jungle" that was based on the survival of the fittest. It surely has no place in modern, enlightened, twentieth-century society. Do you think we should go to the other extreme and expect the state to take over the full responsibility for our welfare from the cradle to the grave? This, of course, is the socialistic, welfare-state philosophy. It too, is a relic of the social evolution of past years and the older European countries from whence it was imported to this continent, and is often paraded here as a modern social concept. Actually, it is a philosophy alien to this country and this continent, and certainly it is completely foreign to the pioneer spirit of self-reliance and enterprise that was responsible for developing Canada and the United States into countries with the greatest productivity and the highest standard of living in the world. It is a philosophy that progressively destroys individual initiative and enterprise and responsibility, and finally reduces all members of society to the lowest common denominator. It leads inevitably to a state-dominated society. Like extreme individualism, it has no place in a virile, progressive society made up of men and women who cherish their independence and self-reliance, and their freedom of choice.

There is a third alternative to which I believe the vast majority of the people of this Province subscribe, and that is a democratic, responsible, free-enterprise society, in which each individual is free to exercise his own initiative and enterprise to secure and improve his position, while the state assists to whatever extent is necessary to bring the opportunities and benefits of modern society within the reach of all. I need hardly assure you that this is the philosophy to which we, as your government, unreservedly subscribe. I

think if we get this clearly in mind — if it's something on which we agree — then our concern must be to continually improve the operation of our free society to ensure the maximum benefit and the maximum satisfaction to all the people of this Province. That is our desire as your government, and I'm sure it is your desire as the individual citizens who make up the people of this Province.

While we are clarifying our thinking on these issues, let's take a few moments to clear up some of the common fallacies and misconceptions which are abroad in this country today. There is the fallacy that those who advocate a welfare-state society are the only people who are really concerned for the good and welfare of men and women. This fallacy is the popular propaganda of Socialists and Communists and their fellow-travellers. It is wholly false, just as their assertions that a socialistic welfare state is the only way in which the social needs of people can be met. The vast majority of those who oppose socialism and advocate a free-enterprise society as a better way to meet human needs, are as concerned for the good and welfare of people as any Socialist, and often more so, because they want people to have not only social security, but security without the loss of their individual freedom of choice and individual enterprise.

There are also some common misconceptions of free enterprise that should be cleared up. I think we all have to recognize that some people advocate free enterprise for the purpose of preserving or protecting some entrenched interest or position which they presently enjoy. In other words, their motive is wholly a selfish motive. I want to make it clear that this certainly isn't what I mean at all, when I speak of a genuine, free-enterprise society for our Province and for

this country. A genuine, free-enterprise society must provide genuine, free-enterprise for all of the people, whether they are the owners of the biggest industry or corporation, or whether it is the owner of the smallest farm, or whether it is the workman in the smallest shop. A genuine, free-enterprise society must accord each of them, in their respective positions, the same measure of choice, the same measure of freedom of opportunity as is accorded to the others.

While we are talking about these terms, let's say a word about the common expression that we hear so often today, of whether a philosophy is "right" or "left". I suggest to you that these are poor terms because they so often convey misleading impressions. When you speak of a political philosophy or program being on the "right", to many people this means an extreme reactionary position — extreme conservatism, extreme individualism. Likewise, when people talk about a philosophy or a program being on the "left", to many this means some form of extreme radical socialism. I don't like these terms for this reason. I am afraid it is the use of such terms as these that tends to divide people unnecessarily into categories often misunderstood because the terms carry with them an extreme connotation that gives the wrong idea altogether.

I would like to suggest to you, friends, as we start into this new year, that it is time to forget these confusing, misleading, academic terms and address ourselves to the practical, pertinent facts which are important; and so, starting with the promise that we are going to make in this Province the best society in this entire nation, and that we are going to meet the needs and the legitimate desires of all our people in a free society without destroying their individual initiative and enter-

prise, let us decide, first, as I have said, what it is that we want for ourselves and for our Province as we enter the new year. Let's be sure the things we say we want are the best things in our own interests and in the interests of our children and our Province. Then when we have satisfied and clarified our thinking on that point, let's consider the steps necessary to attain it, on one hand, on the part of the people themselves, and on the other hand, on the part of their government, and then go ahead working together to do whatever needs to be done to see that we get the results that we have together agreed we want.

Now friends, this is our thinking as we start into another momentous year that holds great promise for this Province. We have already told you something of the far-reaching governmental program that we are developing to still further improve the work and efforts of the government to help you, as the people, realize these results from the management of your affairs.

I'd appreciate having your comments on these matters. Thank you for viewing tonight, and good-night.