

The Constitution

your lives." I feel good about being able to say that this freedom is entrenched in the Constitution. This applies to Hutterites in Saskatchewan and Alberta as well. This freedom cannot be taken away by any amending formula because it is included in the charter of rights.

Similarly, when my born again brothers and sisters in Christ quote John 3: 16 and tell me how they have a personal faith in Christ, I can say to them, "We are not setting up any barriers in the Constitution; we are entrenching this bill of rights in the Constitution." I can even say to some of the Mennonites in my constituency who do not vote or will not vote because of their belief and conscience, "You, too, have freedom of conscience; you, too, have freedom of religion." I think it is important that this be recognized regardless of what has been said in the House to date.

Let us take a further look at the charter of rights and some other matters which have been mentioned. With respect to aboriginal rights, I am happy to see Section 33 in the charter of rights. I must concur with my colleagues, the hon. member for Winnipeg-St. James (Mr. Keeper) and the hon. member for Kamloops-Shuswap (Mr. Riis), when they say that if the recognition and affirmation of aboriginal rights were not included in the Constitution, many of us would have great difficulty going to the Indian reserves in our areas to try to answer questions which might be asked. In my constituency there are some seven Indian reserves. I can go to the north, to Shoal River, to Ebb and Flow, to Crane River, to Pine Creek, to Sandy Bay, to Valley River or Waterhen—any of these Indian reserves—and I say, "Yes, we have recognized aboriginal rights in the Constitution."

● (1640)

People ask me why I favour aboriginal rights. There are a number of reasons but one of the main ones can be found in Proverbs 23, verses 10 and 11. Solomon said:

Remove not the old landmarks and enter not into the fields of the fatherless:
For their redeemer is mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee.

I am very happy that there can be an affirmation of the contribution to our country of our native people, whether they be Inuit, Métis or Indian, in the charter of rights.

Let me turn now to Section 15, which I think is very important. It deals with the rights of the disabled. The marginal note reads "Equality before and under law and equal protection and benefit of law." The section provides that there shall not be discrimination based on mental or physical disability.

My colleague, the hon. member for Beaches (Mr. Young), worked hard on the special task force and on the committee when it dealt with this matter. I have had a lot of personal experience in working with disabled people. For three years I was a supervisor of group programs with the Society for Crippled Children and Adults in Manitoba so I know the battles that must be fought to make sure that the disabled are accorded their rights. In fact, if anything was the catalyst which led me to become involved in politics, it was this. I had to run five times before getting elected, of course. As an

administrator and supervisor I found that I was unable to do anything for the disabled, because when I wanted to tackle a program I came up against regulations which did not recognize equality for the disabled. It was the desire to have input and to make sure that the disabled receive due recognition that first involved me in the political scene.

When we think about the matter logically and philosophically, we realize that all of us have a certain disability. For example, I cannot swim; even though I have taken pre-beginner swimming lessons a few times I still cannot swim. There were many Monday nights at the Misericordia Hospital in Winnipeg when the disabled took swimming lessons. They now swim far better than I can. We all have disabilities in one form or another. It must be recognized that people who may be physically disabled are not necessarily mentally deficient. A lot of them are much brighter and more intelligent than I ever will be, Mr. Speaker. I am very happy to see this section in the resolution. We recognize the importance of the disabled and their rights should be entrenched in the Constitution.

The next matter I want to deal with is multiculturalism. Section 27 of the resolution states:

This charter shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians.

It is fitting that we recognize the importance of multiculturalism in this year, 1981. It was on October 8, 1971, that the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) announced for Canada "A policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework" and called for "a vigorous policy of multiculturalism". At that time there was unanimous agreement in the House on this issue. This year, 1981, is the tenth anniversary of the inception of the multiculturalism program, so it is appropriate that in the Constitution Act of 1981 we recognize and affirm Canada's multicultural reality.

At least one third of the Canadian population is of neither English nor French descent. While people of British and French origins form the two largest groups in Canada, a significant number of other ethnic groups, numerically and quantitatively, form part of the population. The German, Italian and Ukrainian communities are respectively the third, fourth, and fifth largest in Canada.

According to the 1971 census, there are 44 different ethnic groups in Canada's 22 million people. These ethnic groups have contributed to the building of Canada. As a rule, people are wont to consider only the two founding groups. The aboriginal people have been mentioned in the Constitution, and rightly so, but in addition we must always remember the others who helped build the country by the sweat of their brows.

A large number of Italians came to this country to help build the CPR. Some 15,000 Chinese from Canton and Hong Kong also came to help build the CPR. The record shows that in 1900 a Chinese person coming to Canada paid a head tax of \$100. By 1903 that had gone up to \$500. There were prohibitions for these people who came to help build our country, but they came just the same and they worked hard.