

Supply—Justice

Minister of Justice, who has spoken to the Canadian Bar Association on these transcendent and important issues, to speak to the house on these constitutional issues. Let him speak here and tell us where he and his government stand on the constitutional issues of the day. I want to tell him that in the minds of many Canadians they think there is a vacuum at the centre.

Quebec, as we all know, is seething with demands for constitutional change and the rest of us have no right to say now, as we used to say, that we do not know what Quebec wants. Naturally there is a multiplicity of voices. In fact, Mr. Chairman, as I am speaking there is a multiplicity of voices in the chamber. However, I understand that the Quebec Liberal Federation has demanded a new constitution, with a special or particular status for Quebec. The premier of Quebec has made it clear that in his opinion the future of Canada depends on constitutional change. I notice that he has recently taken on a special adviser to the cabinet on constitutional issues, a very respected businessman, Marcel Faribeault, who, in collaboration with Mr. Fowler has written a book on the vital importance of a new constitution, and just the other day repeated that he would not back down from anything he had said in that book.

As some hon. members know, *Le Devoir* on June 30 issued a special anniversary issue containing 23 articles, all but two written by people in the province of Quebec, setting out in detail the changes which the authors think are desirable. As we all know, the premier of Ontario has called a conference to discuss the future of confederation. Everyone will be at it but the people who should be there, who should be the most important of all, the elected representatives in the government of Canada. This conference is something like playing Hamlet without the prince of Denmark. I think it is absurd to discuss the future of the constitution of the country without representatives of the government of Canada being present, not just as observers but as the elected representatives to participate in the discussion that takes place.

I say there is an urgent need for the formulation of a federal Canadian point of view. I am not saying that the points of view of the various provinces are not Canadian, but I am saying there is a need for the federal authority to express its point of view, and this point of view, I suggest, should be definite, and

about certain essentials it should be absolutely firm, although, there is room for flexibility in some matters.

Again I say that this chamber is the place where we have the right to know where the government stands on these matters. Speaking to the Canadian Bar Association on September 4 the Minister of Justice said that the federal government declares it is ready to discuss any constitutional changes proposed. I suggest that that is not good enough. The federal government must itself put forward its own proposals. In my view the proposal to discuss a constitutional bill of rights is just not good enough.

As the minister probably knows, I am enthusiastic about the general proposal to incorporate a constitutional bill of rights into the written constitution of the country. But if it is put forward in isolation, if it is put forward as a first and only step, I suggest it will be shot down. I think it should be part of a package deal.

I expect that the minister has read the article by Professor Edward McWhinney of McGill University. I do not seem to have his article with me, but I will invite the minister to reread it.

Mr. Trudeau: I have read it but I do not think I would care to reread it.

Mr. Brewin: Further, Mr. Chairman, I want to say that it is not good enough, as some ministers have been doing, to talk about educational and cultural rights alone. No doubt they are vastly important and I hope all English speaking Canadians, including the premier of British Columbia, will give a resounding yes to legitimate demands that the educational and cultural rights of French speaking Canadians be given precisely the same generous treatment in the provinces that are predominantly English speaking as the English speaking minority has enjoyed for some time in the province of Quebec.

• (9:20 p.m.)

I simply do not want to underestimate the importance of that, but I do suggest that this alone is not enough. In an admirable editorial in *Le Devoir* of September 26 Mr. Claude Ryan dealt with this matter. He said that two things were necessary. If the minister will forgive my poor pronunciation, I will read in French part of what Mr. Ryan said:

[*Translation*]

At the level of the whole federation, they want, within the fullest possible measure, to have the