

The Constitution

the Lac-Saint-Jean riding that I am working for them. Mr. Speaker, I feel the time has come for Quebecers to be told the truth about what is going on with regard to the constitutional renewal we are now launching. In Quebec, we have been accused of selling out the province, of betraying Bill 101, of changing the Constitution unilaterally, of everything imaginable. That has been said about the 75 Members of Parliament from Quebec, all the while insisting that we are acting like sheep. That is important.

● (1710)

There is one thing I want to tell the people of Quebec right now, and especially the people of my riding and that is that, as hon. members of the Government of Canada, we are not really changing the Canadian Constitution but preparing the context needed or desirable to change it in fact. This means, in simple terms, since I am an ordinary man, that we are in the process of asking the British government to send us back our Constitution so that 11 first ministers, the ten provincial premiers and the Right Hon. Prime Minister of Canada (Mr. Trudeau) can sit around a table and discuss what changes are necessary so that our country can better meet the needs of the Canadians of today and those of tomorrow. At the same time, we tell our friends on the other side of the river or the ocean: Enshrine a charter of rights in that Constitution. You may say: But why a charter of rights? Very simple. Renewing a Constitution is renewing a country. It may even mean changing all the rights, all the laws that govern Canadians.

In that context, as representative of the 80,000 citizens who live in the riding of Lac-Saint-Jean, I shall never accept that 11 first ministers, even if they are great Canadians, including the Right Hon. Prime Minister, should play around with the Canadian constitution and change it without first making sure that the fundamental rights of the people I represent are protected by a charter of rights enshrined forever in the Constitution. Of course, that is not perfect. But those who tried to achieve perfection at one fell swoop, do you know what they do in life? Nothing at all. Perfection cannot be achieved at first go. In addition, both a referendum formula and an amending formula will be included in the Constitution to prevent any systematic deadlock. We are not going to spend another 20 years of our life quibbling over that, wondering where we are going, what we are going to do. We have to find a solution to the Canadian constitutional problem. Our Constitution just has to be renewed because, as we know, when it was drawn up, there were no television, no airplanes; transportation even by road was much slower.

So many things have changed in this country. And so quickly. That is all we are about to do. To those who shout rape and treason, and those who come up with all sorts of arguments saying that we are betraying Quebec, I say that for the first time in the history of Canada, the rights of francophones to education in their own tongue, to their language, recognition of the French fact will be enshrined in the Consti-

tution of Canada and no one, no prime minister, no government can change that without the consent of the Canadian people. Is that not a step forward?

I have seen very frustrating things happen in my riding, among others. We have all heard of the notorious petition which I mentioned earlier, the solidarity movement or whatever, which has been going around Quebec for the past six months. The signatures were to be gathered within a month and sent to all of us members from Quebec, challenging us to act according to the will of the people. I have seen how they operate. The people responsible for this petition tried first of all to go everywhere. When that did not work they went to the schools, but that did not work either. They asked the FTQ to help them and, like any good union they agreed and said, "Yes, Mr. Minister, we will do it." The FTQ had people sign it. But that did not work either. People were forced to sign. They were told to sign. No, thank you. Sign. After trying ten times, people signed. People were also told that if they did not sign, they were not genuine Quebecers. How great! What does that mean? That seems to imply that there are two classes of Quebecers. I am beginning to wonder about those two classes of Quebecers. I will give you an example.

If I had to choose between being a fake Quebecer like the Minister of Justice who went to Washington two years ago and addressed the World Bank, in French only, and being a genuine Quebecer like the Premier of Quebec, Mr. Lévesque, who two months after being elected delivered a speech entirely in English in New York, I would choose the former. He spoke two words in French: Saint-Félicien and Baie James, two projects, by the way, which he considered as political balloons before coming to power. I personally prefer being a fake francophone who speaks French in Washington than a genuine one who speaks English in New York. For sure. If being a fake Quebecer means deciding, like the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Lamontagne) did with his colleagues, to purchase F-18 fighters which will bring \$1.5 million to Quebec, I prefer being a fake Quebecer rather than a genuine Quebecer like René Lévesque who buys \$11 million worth of buses from General Motors in the U.S. rather than from Bombardier, in Québec.

I would rather be a fake Quebecer in that context. We do not need arm-chair Quebecers any longer. The drawing room days are gone when the intellectuals, the intelligentsia, were luring everybody in the province of Quebec, saying we all were going to rebuild this country, and perhaps by putting everything aside we were going to build another country which would be much better, a much better home to live in. Even if we have to keep outside in the cold for another ten years there would be nothing to it. We are going to build another country afterwards. Those days are over; all that silly talk is over. It is time now to act. Now we have people who sit down and discuss.