

Constitutional Accord

• (1230)

I appeal to the Premiers of this country to recognize that in order to complete the circle of a strong federal Government and provinces, and the diversity and uniqueness of Quebec, we must also include the uniqueness of our native Indian people with an appropriate amendment which recognizes aboriginal self-government in Canada. We may already have had that, were it not for the intransigence of Premier Devine, Premier Getty and Premier Vander Zalm. I appeal to them once again to reconsider their position and to establish public hearings in their provinces so that aboriginal people have a chance to have some input in terms of constitutional building.

As someone who has a name which is neither French nor English, though half English in ancestry, I want to go on record on behalf of our Party as speaking out as strongly as possible to ensure that we have multiculturalism recognized in the Constitution of Canada. I am very happy to see in the final Accord, which came out of the Langevin Block, a change to the original Accord, that nothing in the Accord will derogate from the existing rights of multicultural groups in this country. I think that is a very important thing which should be noted and explained to the people.

In this country we have a lot of differences, but I do not think that we should let those differences divide us. I think those differences are what makes this country unique. I come from a riding where there are people of many national backgrounds, such as Ukrainian, Chinese, Russian, native Indian and the odd Scandinavian like myself. We have people of British background, and a few of French background, although not many. In my kind of province we have a cultural mosaic. It is really great to go to a non-Ukrainian wedding in my riding and find that many of the customs are Ukrainian because they have picked up some tremendously interesting and vital customs from the Ukrainian culture. I think we have done that right across this country. We are not the same melting pot as we see south of the border in the United States. Because of those differences I think we are richer and I feel these differences will unite this country in an even greater way.

It is very important that we support this Accord because it is very important to change the Constitution to include Quebec.

[Translation]

And as I said, it is important to recognize Quebec as a distinct society and to have our Constitution recognize that Quebec is different. It is not only a matter of the different language spoken by the majority of Quebecers. They have a different culture. They have the Civil Code. There are many differences.

[English]

Second, I want to comment on the spending power and the powers of central Government. I think Pierre Trudeau has exaggerated to its utmost limit some of the dire consequences which could happen to the central authority or the spending

power. I think he has taken the worst case, exaggerating as much as possible.

My colleague, the Hon. Member for New Westminster—Coquitlam pointed out that she was in this House when Lester Pearson was Prime Minister and when he talked about co-operative federalism. The Right Hon. Lester Pearson tried to get recognition of spending power by the federal Government in the Constitution and he could not. Now it is part of the Meech Lake Accord. In fact, there is a reference to the Government of Canada in terms of spending power which was not there before. There is also a recognition in the Accord of national objectives, which was not there before. I suggest that some of the things which were fought for by Lester Pearson back in the 1960s are now coming to fruition.

With respect to the federal spending power and the amending formula, I think in many ways we now have less of a strait jacket, because all we need are seven provinces out of 10. If we look at the history of medical care, unemployment insurance and the Canada Pension Plan, we find that in all those cases we built a consensus for the unanimity of the provinces with the federal Parliament before we went ahead. Now if we have a province such as Newfoundland, Saskatchewan, Ontario or British Columbia, which is intransigent and says, no, it will not necessarily hold back the rest of the country.

We talk here about the federal spending power and we are talking about it in areas of exclusive provincial rights. Those are the rights of the provinces. They do not get compensated for a national program unless their own programs are compatible with national objectives. What is wrong with that? If the program is not compatible with national objectives they will not receive compensation, and if it is a proper and popular program they will suffer the consequences in the next provincial election.

Mr. Caccia: What will you do with the extra billing?

Mr. Nystrom: Extra billing does not fit into this example at all. If there is any Party which knows something about medicare it is the Party of Tommy Douglas which fought for medicare in North America from Saskatchewan some 25 years ago come July 1.

With respect to the Supreme Court and the Senate, I wonder why some people such as Pierre Trudeau and the Hon. Member for Saint-Henri—Westmount (Mr. Johnston) and a few others, think the federal Government should have the unilateral right to appoint the Justices of the Supreme Court. This is a federal country. We have two orders of government which are equal.

In Saskatchewan we have had problems with Supreme Court decisions. In our province the Supreme Court struck down legislation by the Blakeney Government to tax foreign multinational oil companies. That was done because there was no input from the provinces in the selection of those judges.