

Statute Law Amendment Act

was not due to what the Liberal Government did, but in spite of it.

• (1750)

The Constitution Act was initiated as a partisan venture which expressed the views of the then Government. But it had to become bigger than that. There had to be consultation with the nation which the Government had not intended. That consultation was forced on the Government by provincial Governments, the strong and courageous stand of the Opposition Parties and, finally, it was forced on it by the courts. In that great constitutional debate we have an example of what we were trying to achieve through the process which is under consideration in this legislation, that is, to bring the entire nation into the discussion and to involve all interested parties.

Over and over again the Hon. Member said that this Government wants to maintain its popularity and that democratic government is not a popularity contest. I believe that the Hon. Member is misreading the situation. The word "popularity" originates from the word "populus". It involves the populace of the country. This Government is striving to involve the population of Canada in a Bill which is vital to all groups. Surely, the wisdom in that is that the Government should not attempt to set forth the rights of certain minority groups and risk polarization in society. Very frequently that has been the result, because social change has been made without the widest consensus possible.

I would hope that the Hon. Member would see the merits and the value of the process in which we are engaged. In spite of the credit which is due to her former Leader, the former Prime Minister of Canada, I have to believe that no one ever talked so much about unity and no one ever did so much to polarize the country. With the style of government in which we are now engaged, we are striving to avoid polarization by bringing the people of Canada together to express their consensus in legislation which will achieve their common aspirations.

Mrs. Finestone: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Hon. Member for his observations as they give me an opportunity to express my point of view. He spoke about *vox populi*. It was the *vox populi* that said they were going to elect a large and strong Conservative majority. Every Tory Member is a representative of a riding and the people who live in it. The people have given them a mandate and have shown trust. The issues before this House—when it comes to minority and majority responsibilities and how a Government must respond—are the responsibilities of those Members. Government Members will have to face their electors. If the electors do not like what they are going to do, they will let their Members know. The electors certainly let them know when the universality issue arose. Government Members changed their view.

I am not concerned. This is a consultation with the public. Members of the Government have come into the House to put into operation a new form of government and a new direction. They can go back and consult their constituents one by one if

they wish, but not when it comes to legislating the kind of values which stand behind the people who are the most vulnerable and weak in our society.

I am a new Member and I am learning lots of things. I do not know if he is a new Member, but I look forward to meeting him. I would like to bring to his attention—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I regret to interrupt the Hon. Member, but I would like to indicate that she has 30 seconds remaining.

Mrs. Finestone: I would like to bring to the attention of the Hon. Member a list of very important witnesses who represent the grass roots all the way along the political spectrum. Those witnesses came, in 1980 and 1981, to the constitutional hearings to express their concerns and to indicate what needed to be done to put Section 15 into application. All the texts of the drafts of law were there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The time allowed for questions and comments has now terminated. I will now recognize the Hon. Member for Broadview-Greenwood (Ms. McDonald) on debate.

Ms. Lynn McDonald (Broadview-Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on Bill C-27, an Act to amend certain Acts having regard to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. There is nothing very objectionable about the Bill. What is wrong with it is the omissions. The Bill consists of a lot of trivial points. Certainly, amendments are required. But the really important issues were not dealt with in the Bill. Those issues appear in the discussion paper.

The Bill has been referred to as housekeeping legislation. If it had really been housekeeping, it would have been much better. It is no better than a lick and a promise. With regard to justice and equality, what is needed is a good spring cleaning. That, we do not have.

[*Translation*]

What is scandalous is that, instead of introducing legislation to ensure equality with regard to pensions, equal opportunities in the labour market and maternity leave, the Government wants to have a discussion. It has raised the question of equality on the matter of pensions, but is it fair that women should receive a lower pension because they live longer than men on the average? It is obvious that women need the same pensions as men. They pay the same for housing, food and transport. Their pension is lower because pensions are linked to wages and women do not earn as much as men.

[*English*]

Instead of dealing with that very important matter in a concrete manner, it has been relegated to discussion. The sex-based mortality tables are used to compute annuities, which will mean that women will get lower amounts than men. There is no discrimination on the basis of race or any other behavioural characteristic in the tables. Simply, women get lower annuities than men because they live longer. However,