

British North America Act

The fourth article which deals with the Supreme Court of Canada was also very important. It brought about a new flexibility to the operation of the Supreme Court, from the appointment of judges to the establishment of a college which included the attorney general, and so on and so forth.

The chapter on federal courts was also very interesting, and so was article 9 which dealt with constitutional amendments. I must confess, Mr. Speaker, that I should have been very proud at the time if the Quebec government had voted in favour of the Victoria Charter. I think that it was flexible enough to allow for the evolution of our country. I will quote, for instance, the Quebec City newspaper *Le Soleil* in its edition of June 23, 1971, in which the editorialist concluded as follows: "The acceptance by the provinces of this charter would enable us to repatriate our constitution and it is the interest of Quebec, like all other provinces, and to a certain degree, more than the other provinces, that the constitutional charter become a new step toward the affirmation of our national identity and of the two cultures on which it is founded." Mr. Speaker, that statement by the editorialist of the newspaper *Le Soleil* in 1971 reflected accurately the view taken by a good number of Quebecers of the Victoria conference. Again I regret that the government of Quebec was not at that time more broad-minded and did not give its support to those negotiations.

With respect to regional development, the hon. member for Egmont made very interesting comments and I am convinced that they represent the concerns of an important part of the people. However, I do not think it is necessary to amend the constitution to get working on that issue. It is high time for the government to have a real regional economic development policy truly adapted to the needs of all regions. It is also high time we have a real policy to give help to small and medium-sized businesses. Of course, a statement of intent in a constitution does represent some guarantees, but it does not represent any, for instance, for the Quebec dairy producers, the shoe industry in the riding of Portneuf which is having a hard time of it, but a real policy for the small and medium enterprises would surely reassure them.

A policy to protect our industry would give relative protection to our markets in the face of progressively obtruding imports. I would like to touch upon one last point: I regret that the proposal of the hon. member for Egmont is not more complete. I should have liked him to invite the government of Canada once again to resume the discussion on the patriation of the constitution, as soon as possible, and in another framework. At the time of the Victoria Charter, which is recalled here, several newspapers in Quebec pointed out the need for a broader forum for the constitutional discussions. After the November 15 election in Quebec of a party that wants to destroy the country, several editors took up once again in the newspapers the idea of broadening the constitutional debate. I feel we should attempt to remove it from the narrow compass of government heads alone, that is the Prime Minister of Canada and the premiers of the provinces, so far the only participants in the constitutional debate.

[Mr. Bussières.]

To my mind, the forum must be enlarged. The hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin) was saying a while ago that we seldom have occasion to discuss that topic in the House, and I think all parties sitting both in the House of Commons and in the provincial legislatures are interested in those negotiations and should participate in them. I also believe many other citizens would be eager to discuss those questions; the sooner we come to an agreement and patriate the constitution, the sooner we will have the opportunity of proving to the people that the government of Canada is able to adapt to situations and problems.

As our Prime Minister said recently in Quebec City, the objective of the constitutional discussions is to give each level of government the powers it needs to achieve as best it can the well-being of the citizens. And I think this should be our objective, without getting caught in the trap which the member who rose before me referred to, that is to say taking away from the central government the powers which allow it to distribute the wealth which is unfortunately uneven throughout the country. I think that if we vigorously tackle the constitutional revision and allow as many Canadians as possible to participate in the discussions, we will be able to come to an agreement and to include article 7 of the Victoria Charter as well as the other items. By doing so, I think our constitution will meet the expectations of all Canadians in a more satisfactory manner.

• (1740)

[English]

Mr. Mark MacGuigan (Windsor-Walkerville): Mr. Speaker, I should like to congratulate the hon. member for Egmont (Mr. MacDonald) on his support for regional economic development. Perhaps because I grew up, like him and with him, in Prince Edward Island, we both appreciate very much the need for regional economic development.

• (1750)

If there is any place in Canada which needs regional economic development, it is Prince Edward Island. However, that is one of the places which has been undergoing it, and while in general I think I am not entirely satisfied with the way regional economic development has been proceeding—and this is one of the mental caveats I would feel if I were supporting a motion of this kind—I nevertheless think that in that province the development plan has been reasonably successful, and of course, many years of the plan are still to come.

I suppose we are all a bit uneasy about the fact that no method which has been tried so far—at least none of which I am aware—in the area of regional economic development has proved to be entirely successful, but there are many problems in life like that which we cannot entirely solve, and I think it is important for us to go on trying to solve them and certainly to express in the Chamber our support for those great objectives.

My problem with the motion is not at all with respect to its subject matter. As mentioned by the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin), my problem has to do with the end of the