

Constitution Act, 1867

in relation with the free trade talks with the United States, concerns are being expressed on all sides about the loss of identity or the loss of such or such a market?

Mr. Speaker, I do not believe in dreaming or in improvising, especially when major national decisions are involved, and in this case, I think that we are discussing a project which does not seem to have produced any consensus.

Mr. Speaker, this consensus does not exist among the many parties involved nor among the Canadian population as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, the entire issue of what is and what is not part of the National Capital raises the problem of national symbols. This is therefore a very sensitive issue.

While it is a fact that, in the last 25 years, Canada has acquired symbols to establish its own identity, it should also be noted that these changes did not come by easily. A gesture can acquire a symbolic value only to the extent that those to whom it is addressed view it as legitimate. A symbol is essentially the result of a consensus, Mr. Speaker.

In this context, who could state today that the proposal to amend Section 16 of the Constitutional Act of 1867 finds such a consensus among the population? On the contrary, an overview of possible reactions at the local, provincial and national levels seems to indicate that there are good reasons to justify strong resistance.

On the local level, we are aware of the neighbourly relationships between Hull and Gatineau trying to decide which is the metropolitan centre of Western Quebec.

Mrs. Mailly: Gatineau.

Mr. Cadieux: I did not expect anything else from my colleague, Mr. Speaker, and I would probably agree to some extent. However, Mr. Speaker, this is not what we are discussing today and I do not wish to get involved in regional hassles that might develop between those two cities.

But that is just one example of the problem that would probably crop up.

Mr. Speaker, can you imagine in that context what the debate on the question of the National Capital might look like here in the House, with my colleague possibly putting forward her specific interests, and I could not blame her for doing so!

At the provincial level, who knows how the province of Quebec would react, Mr. Speaker? In the late sixties, when the federal Government kept buying lots here and there, the Quebec Government set up the Dorion Commission to review the whole issue of territorial integrity. There is no indication that the Quebec Government has changed its mind, Mr. Speaker. For all we know, the *Communauté régionale de l'Outaouais*, which was created following the recommendations of that Commission, is still in existence. Would Ontario itself be willing to give up the whole area of Ottawa, Vanier

and Kanata and neighbouring rural areas for the sake of creating a federal district? I have very strong doubts about that. I am sure in fact that Quebec and Ontario would never be willing to give up a fragment of their municipalities. And supposing they did, what would be the tax status of the people living in that new federal district?

Would the federal Government have to compensate provincial governments for the loss of existing infrastructure? Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, trying to assess the present cost of that infrastructure? and the per capita debt that this new federal district would incur from the provinces and municipalities involved? At the national level, Mr. Speaker, did we consult with all the people and provincial governments of Canada? Do we know how they view such an amendment? I do not believe that we can assess, or even assume that it would be accepted; quite the contrary!

Mr. Speaker, I wish to stress that building a national capital is one thing, but forcing in a premature way a complex patriotic chore and a difficult constitutional challenge upon the people of Canada is another. Canada has just begun recovering from the constitutional upheaval brought about by the previous Government. For goodness sake, let us give it a break.

Victor Hugo wrote that you cannot decree peace more than you can decree sunrise. In a small way, Mr. Speaker, this is a bit of wisdom which could be applied to this debate. History has its own way of doing things, it proceeds with great slowness and man should not force issues, even though he sometimes does by resorting to brutal and useless wars. Everything should be left to happen in its own sweet time.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that we will have to study carefully and seriously the tremendous political and economical difficulties that such a project could bring to bear on Canadians. Thus, I feel that it would be reasonable that such a bill—

[*English*]

—be looked at a lot more because, as I just said in the other official language, I do not think this is the time, nor are we in circumstances right now which permit us to enter into such a debate. We have economic concerns which must be dealt with right away. As a matter of fact, the budget debate is presently taking place. After what we heard today and yesterday we know that Canada must be put back on track economically.

I do not think we ought to spend too much time trying to recreate a constitutional debate which has already taken too much time in the House and perhaps contributed to the huge deficit which we inherited because the Government at that time did not ensure that the economy was going well and that jobs were being created. Right now our role is to work on the economy and to create the jobs which Canadians need so badly. Although the Constitution is an interesting topic, we must now put this motion aside because the time is not right for it, notwithstanding the repeated efforts of the Member for Hull-Aylmer (Mr. Isabelle) to bring this subject forward. It might be a very good idea in theory, but when you put theory