

recognized and enshrined now, they never will be, not so long as we have people like Premier Hatfield who denies the very concept of aboriginal rights. If we believe in native rights, we must act now. In committee we will be moving and supporting amendments to achieve this. We take the Prime Minister at his word that he will be willing to accept amendments.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Manly: The other night, the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) asked for a spirit of compromise. I ask the government if, in that spirit of compromise, whether it will change its position and recognize the basic rights of our native people so that they are not compromised right out of the picture. I ask the government to include as schedules to the constitution such documents as the treaties and the royal proclamation of 1763 which will assure the native people that their native rights are not being denied.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, let me point to a fact that is often ignored when we speak about Indian people. We often hear the statistics about poverty, unemployment and poor health. We watch television documentaries about substandard housing and the failure of the educational system. We know all about the negative side of Indian life, and every six months or so it becomes a two-day wonder for the media. What we do not hear or see is the positive side—that there is something good about being Indian. For hundreds of years Indian peoples in North America have refused to assimilate or lose their identity as Indians. In spite of poverty, discrimination, bad housing conditions, the lack of opportunity on reserves and denial of their rights, they hang on to their Indian identity and culture. There is something good for them about their Indian culture. Obviously they have something very valuable.

● (0030)

What they ask from Canada is a recognition of their rights so that they can maintain their identity and the culture which is so important to them. They ask for their rights so that they can build a decent economy which will enable them to maintain their status, rights and culture with some dignity. Native people do not believe that being Indian, Métis or Inuit must go hand in hand with poverty. I believe Canada needs the contribution native people can make to our social fabric. We can learn from them. We have the wealth and resources in this country to afford a pluralistic society. We do not all need to fit into the same mold. The native people of our country can only make a contribution if we recognize their rightful place in our society and give them their due.

On behalf of the more than one million native people of this country, I appeal to the government to recognize and entrench the rights of native people so that they can take their full place in Canadian society, and, furthermore, so that Canada can achieve its destiny as a nation of justice and opportunity for all people.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Constitution

Mr. Bill Kempling (Burlington): Mr. Speaker, I had hoped to follow the hon. member for Essex-Windsor (Mr. Whelan) because he gave one of his usual speeches which did not say very much. Had he given his speech on a manure spreader, it never would have had a bigger load. To stand in the House of Commons and ask people to believe when he travels around the world that people say, "Oh, you are from Canada, that country which has its constitution in London" is just pure nonsense. How can anyone be expected to believe that?

An hon. Member: Express it in farm terms.

Mr. Kempling: I must remember the decorum of the House. I cannot express it in farm terms.

It has been written that when the British Parliament had the BNA Act before it in 1867, the act passed in 30 minutes because a much more urgent matter was waiting to be introduced. That matter was an act dealing with the licensing of dogs. It was a much more urgent matter than the constitution of Canada. The reason it took only 30 minutes to pass was that the British House had full knowledge that several years of discussion had preceded the writing of the act. The Parliament of Westminster knew that such discussion had taken place. Some of it was very bitter, but in the final analysis a consensus was reached and they felt justified in passing it in 30 minutes.

We have heard many members on the other side say that the country has been confounded, put in a strait-jacket or what have you, for 53 years. I had a resumé done by the parliamentary library of the constitutional conferences from 1927 to 1980. Anyone reading it would realize that it is just not so, the country has not been tied. There have been many, many instances where there has been complete consensus. In fact there were two occasions when the premiers and the federal authorities agreed unanimously to suspend further discussion on the constitution because they had more urgent matters before them, most of them dealing with the economy. Anyone who tries to persuade the people of Canada that somehow we have been strangled and tied for 53 years is perpetuating a fraud.

The first time the provincial premiers met, shortly after confederation, it was to deal with a revenue matter. They met to deal with revenue-sharing because the provinces had given up tariffs to the federal government and the federal government had expanded, in lieu of tariffs, a per capita grant. They met because the rising population in the provinces was such that the revenue was just not adequate. This is really what we are talking about today. When we get down to brass tacks, we realize we are talking about revenues again. The federal government is in a revenue bind. It just does not have enough revenue coming in. It does not want to go the honest route of taxation, as my party endeavoured to do. They are trying to put a claim on provincial revenues so that they will not have to raise federal revenues as much as they probably should.

This debate has taken some rather strange twists and turns today. Members have told us we took up too much time on points of order and questions of privilege and that is one of the reasons why the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard)