

Public Order Act, 1970

Considering that the government rejected all the amendments we proposed and knowing all the weaknesses and inaccuracies of the legislation, I do not feel like supporting the bill. Some may think that I prefer the War Measures Act, but that is not the point. I voted for the War Measures Act because we had no other choice. A more acceptable measure could have been introduced, but it was not. Aware of the weaknesses and inaccuracies of the legislation, it might be said: Of two evils one must choose the lesser. I still think that even the lesser evil is much too great.

Mr. Speaker, the entire history of Canada shows that previous situations resulted in an atmosphere not only of discontent but revolution. This has very deep causes.

In Quebec especially, reference is made to poverty, insecurity, lack of confidence in public men, the failure of the constitutional review. We want, as Quebecers, to be first class citizens, but I think that all those frustrations after many years were liable to create a climate of dissatisfaction. For that reason I will take this opportunity to say once again that the passage of special legislation will not restore the confidence of the people or order in Quebec or elsewhere in Canada.

In connection with the failure of the constitutional review, I read the following this week in *Le Devoir*, and I quote:

In his opening address to the federal-provincial conference held in Ottawa in February 1968, the late Daniel Johnson stated solemnly: "...we all know that the Canadian people is not homogeneous. Although the adamant few still refuse to admit it, we all know that Canada is made up of two nations. What purpose can be achieved by closing our eyes on this basic fact, which is supported by history, sociology and the collective will to live together?"

Perhaps it has become for some people a purely academic exercise to ponder whether the British North America Act is or not the result of a pact, but there is no room for doubt as far as the future is concerned: in order to be valid, a new Canadian constitution will have to be the product of an agreement between our two nations."

—which is the whole history of our country. With all due respect to my colleagues, in the end we will have to acknowledge the existence of the two founding nations in Canada. It is fundamental.

Statements made this week mentioned that it will be possible to keep Quebec in the Confederation through force if necessary. When people end up saying such things it is because they do not know Quebecers.

For over 100 years, millions of French Canadians have not only defended their traditions but also their mother tongue. They have hoped and are still hoping that their aspirations will be fulfilled.

So Quebec is different from the other provinces, with all due reference to the leader of the Ralliement créditiste (Mr. Caouette) who said earlier that he does not favour a special status for Quebec. Maybe he wanted to say that Canada wants to offer us a special status on the occasion of the introduction of the bill on war measures but it is the first time that Quebec is granted a special status and certainly the moment is not at all appropriate to do so.

[Mr. La Salle.]

This special status will have to be recognized in the Constitution that we have been asked to draft and no doubt this issue is most pressing. In fact, a committee on the constitution has at last set to work and is visiting every part of Canada. It should not, however, waste its time visiting the province of Quebec. It has merely to make a careful study of the briefs submitted to Parliament since 1960 by Messrs. Lesage, Johnson, Bertrand and Bourassa. The committee on the constitution has in its files briefs that reflect precisely the aspirations and the wishes of Quebecers. Regardless of the government that submitted them, these briefs make exactly the same requests and would enable the committee on the constitution to understand, once and for all, what Quebec wants and under what conditions Canada will be able to keep this province within Confederation. The committee on the constitution would learn much by reading Daniel Johnson's book entitled *Egalité ou Indépendance* (Equality or Independence).

Quebecers want to live in equality, they want to have the same opportunities as other Canadians have, and to take a full part in building of Canada.

The people of Quebec are well represented in the House. However, some government members from Quebec did not carry out their duty to inform our English-speaking colleagues of the deep aspirations of the population of Quebec. In order to abide by the policies of their party, they have always agreed to an acceptable compromise with provincial governments, provided they belonged to the same party as the federal government.

I am sorry to have to say those things, but I believe that is the crux of the problem, the loss of confidence of Quebecers in the federal representation. Each House member from Quebec has that duty to inform all Canadians of the needs of Quebec and of the conditions that will make it possible for that province to remain within Confederation.

For 10 years the provincial governments have tried to ensure by every possible means that Quebec be kept within the Confederation. Briefs have been submitted, many studies have been published and it seems that the federal government is not interested.

Mr. Guy LeBlanc (Rimouski): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): The hon. member for Rimouski on a point of order.

Mr. LeBlanc (Rimouski): Mr. Speaker, my remarks will be rather brief. It seems to me that my colleague is making an unforgivable digression. The debate should be on an amendment proposed by the Ralliement créditiste, but the hon. member is giving a lecture on the history of Canada and of the province of Quebec.

● (8:40 p.m.)

Mr. Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): The hon. member for Lotbinière on a point of order.