

The Constitution

Edward Island was treated badly the first time under the amending formula. Then the formula was changed to treat Prince Edward Island like the other provinces, so we find it hard to feel that we should be eternally grateful.

A much more fair formula for Prince Edward Island, the other provinces and for all of Canada is the Vancouver formula, one agreed to by all the provinces and the federal government, but one on which the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) has refused to act. Under the Vancouver formula, constitutional change would require the approval of Parliament and seven provinces making up 50 per cent of the population of Canada. Any proposed changes to the Constitution would then proceed according to the formula. Such a formula would give Prince Edward Island and other provinces with small populations some role in constitutional matters.

Let me give you an example. Suppose six provinces comprising 50 per cent of the population of Canada agree to a constitutional change but they require the approval of a seventh province, irrespective of its population. Prince Edward Island could be that seventh province.

I am not suggesting that Canada should tailor-make its Constitution to meet the particular circumstances of Prince Edward Island, or of any other single province. I am saying, though, that whatever formula is adopted, it should not be unfair to any province. Therefore, the Vancouver formula is infinitely better than the modified Victoria charter.

Before I leave this question of the amending formula, I would like to make a comment concerning the other part of the amending formula proposal; that is, the referendum. The new amending formula is the most dangerous part of the constitutional proposal because of the referendum idea. Through it, Ottawa could impose constitutional changes by referendum. By controlling the rules of the referendum and spending huge amounts of advertising dollars, as it has been known to do, the federal government could manipulate the results. Such action damages federalism and undermines any attempt to build partnership in this country. Any reference to the use of a referendum should be deleted from any Canadian Constitution.

We are a large nation; we have some different values and beliefs in different regions and provinces. We need to have some protection. The proposed two methods of amending our Constitution are simply not acceptable because they do not provide us with the protection we must have.

There were a number of proposed amendments to the joint resolution on the Constitution which the Progressive Conservative party presented to the special joint committee, but which were rejected by the Liberal and New Democratic parties. There are four of these proposed amendments which I feel very strongly about and would like to mention. Most upsetting to me and to many Canadians is the fact that the federal government has denied the supremacy of God in its Constitution. It has rejected the Progressive Conservative proposed amendment which reads as follows:

Affirming that the Canadian nation is founded upon principles that acknowledge the supremacy of God, the dignity and worth of the human person and the position of the family in a society of free individuals and free institutions, Affirming also that individuals and institutions remain free only when freedom is founded upon respect for moral and spiritual values and the rule of law.

The Fathers of Confederation, over 100 years ago, recognized the fundamental fact of the supremacy of God in the affairs of men and nations, as the source from which all human rights and justice are derived. Today, this fact should continue to be recognized. Why in heaven's name would the Liberals and NDP not want a reference to God in the Constitution? I am receiving letters from constituents of mine complaining about the fact there is no mention of the supremacy of God in the Constitution.

The federal government has also rejected the Progressive Conservative proposal that:

Everyone has the right to have reasonable access to information in the possession of any institution of any government.

We want to enshrine the right of freedom of information in the Constitution of Canada. Freedom of information is the vehicle by which Canadians obtain the right to information. We want to see that right asserted in the Constitution.

Nothing in the Constitution should affect the authority of Parliament to legislate in respect of abortion and capital punishment. The federal government has rejected this proposal. Without such a clause, it is possible that the Supreme Court of Canada could overrule Parliament in cases concerning abortion and capital punishment. In no way should this be allowed to happen. I believe on these two issues members of Parliament, not the Supreme Court, should have the final say so that the views and opinions of their constituents may be reflected. By rejecting the PC proposal, the federal government will be allowing the possibility that the courts could indeed be supreme over Parliament. We in the Progressive Conservative Party, and the people of Canada do not want this.

The federal government has voted against the Progressive Conservative proposal which would clarify in our Constitution that Her Majesty the Queen is the head of state of Canada and the provinces.

● (2020)

Over the years the federal government has attempted to reduce the role of the monarchy and substitute in terms of the status of the Queen that in fact the head of state is not Her Majesty, but rather the Governor General. We in the Progressive Conservative Party are concerned that Canada remain a constitutional monarchy. We believe our proposed amendment would constitute such a guarantee. By rejecting our proposal, the federal government is furthering its attempts to lessen the role of the monarchy in Canada, a move feared by many Canadians who want to retain Canada's heritage, who want to retain the constitutional monarchy.

The proposed charter of rights is comprised of many sections, all of which are of vital importance to the future wellbeing of this country. I would like to focus on the section concerning property rights. Many people came to Canada