

Property Rights

property if it means putting up a housing development at the end of a runway at the Regina airport". Any responsible Government has to have the authority to put the public interest and good ahead of the grasping, greedy investors who speculate in property, buying, selling, and putting up developments.

We could ask the people of Prince Edward Island who opposed this. I do not know if they still have the law on their books, but they did have a law which opposed foreign ownership of land in their little province.

Mr. Gass: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. For the clarification of the Hon. Member who is speaking, anyone who lives in Prince Edward Island can own land in Prince Edward Island.

Mr. Benjamin: But, according to its law as I understand it, anyone who does not live in Prince Edward Island cannot. If this amendment went through, Prince Edward Island would not be able to implement its own laws.

Mr. Gass: Point of order.

Mr. Benjamin: That is not a point of order. The hon. gentleman can get up and make his own damn speech.

Mr. McDermid: Then quit telling untruths.

Mr. Benjamin: He can get up and correct me if I am wrong.

Mr. McDermid: That is what he is doing. Let him.

Mr. Benjamin: He cannot do it on phoney points of order.

● (1450)

Mr. Gass: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The hon. gentleman just stated that the people who do not live in P.E.I. cannot own land there. That is totally untrue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There will be one minute left on the speech of the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin).

Mr. Benjamin: Mr. Speaker, I recall the objections of the Government of Prince Edward Island in 1981, perhaps my hon. friend has a short memory. But this applies to every province.

We could not have forced the CPR and the Hudson's Bay Company in Saskatchewan to develop the mineral rights on which they had the leases. We prevented them from enjoying their property. They hauled us into every court in the land, but we beat the buggers anyway!

We could not have brought in a land-bank. The day will come when it comes back. How could we have got some of our national parks if there had been this type of clause in the Constitution? What difficulties would a province or a national Government have had through every court in the country?

The laws that we have are somewhat inadequate. The protection of individual ownership of property is there, but it is not good enough. If I were in the ranks of my friends opposite—heaven forbid—they would do something about improving expropriation laws in order that people were treated more fairly and equitably, and quit trying to ape the United States in our Constitution.

Mr. Dave Nickerson (Western Arctic): Mr. Speaker, I will never be able to understand how the brain works of the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin), if indeed it works at all. The Hon. Member has presented some of the best arguments that I have ever heard in favour of putting property rights in the Constitution. For example, the dispossession of the Japanese Canadians during wartime, and the imposition of the War Measures Act and what that did to the property of people in Quebec at that time.

These are the best arguments we have had in favour of the proposition put forward today by the Hon. Member for Kitchener (Mr. Reimer), but the end position of the Hon. Member for Regina West is that he will vote against it. That is completely unimaginable.

I wish to give a little lesson in pre-history. At one time in the history of the human race on this planet—

Mr. Benjamin: Are you a member of it?

Mr. Nickerson: Like all good Conservatives, Sir. I have some doubt about some other people in the House.

Years and years ago property rights might not have been as important. I am talking about ownership of real estate, land, and buildings more than personal possessions. When people made their living by hunting and gathering, when they were engaged in nomadic herding, even to the stage where people were engaged in agricultural endeavour but moved from place to place and without permanently founded acreages, property rights probably were not thought about. The concept of ownership in land probably did not exist, because it would have no reason to exist.

When I talk to some elderly people in my constituency, it is sometimes difficult for them to understand the concept of ownership in land. As soon as society went to fixed agriculture, and later when we became an industrial society, that is the time when property rights probably became the most fundamental and important of all the human rights that we enjoy.

Today, whether or not we believe in property rights is the determinant of whether or not we believe in the freedom of the individual. People who own property and cannot be dispossessed therefrom are pretty independent people. It is difficult for the state to kick them around. For this reason, the idea of dearly held property rights has not been looked upon as being desirable by people in the employ of government, the professional bureaucrats, for want of a better word. They do not like the idea of independent people who cannot be easily persuaded to do one thing or another as the state might wish them to do,