

institutions which enable the federal and the provincial governments to negotiate almost on diplomatic terms in order to work out compromises between the parties concerned so as to reach some kind of equilibrium. This was done by maintaining provincial autonomy on the one hand and federal autonomy on the other hand. They met in sectors in which both were involved and arrangements were sought. That is the history of Confederation.

● (1712)

There are other approaches. We see, for example, that the American and German constitutions have followed another direction. A new federalism, a different federalism in any case. In such a system of government for regions, provinces, lander and states in the case of the U.S.A., there is some kind of involvement in the central government and administration by the election in the United States of an equal number of senators for each state in Washington, while in the case of German lander, the regional governments appoint representatives to the Bundestag in Bonn. It is a different style of federalism where effectively the regions are somewhat represented in the central parliament or Congress. What are the results? Well, the central government has no longer much to negotiate with the provinces, the States or the Länder, for they are in a way part of the central administration. The federal government could also show its flexibility if the provinces wanted to be present in some way on Parliament Hill. We have already proposed changes to the Senate with this purpose in mind. We are still willing to do so. Our position, as I have often indicated, is that any changes are possible. Everything is possible, except of course in the matter of civil rights protection and for any solution which would tend to destroy Canada as a united and single entity.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: Our position is that everything is possible in the constitutional field, and that we are willing to negotiate, provided that this does not result in weakening the fabric of our country and does not infringe upon the basic individual liberties.

Mr. Speaker, there is a cliché, a trite expression which is commonly used at this time, particularly in my province, namely the status quo. As the cliché goes, this government is bound to the status quo, is rigid and shall not move. The simplest proof that we are not bound to the status quo might be to look somewhat closely at the constitutional proposals we have made from 1968 to 1977. These proposals were aimed at changing the Constitution, in other words the status quo, to demonstrate that federalism has changed and can go on changing.

I shall be brief, Mr. Speaker. Because the proposals are numerous, I shall refer to the headings only. Even before the Victoria Conference we put forward significant changes concerning the Canadian Senate, spending power, provincial fiscal powers, social security and social services, financial institutions and capital markets, the administration of environment prob-

lems. In Victoria, we proposed a number of changes concerning political rights, language rights, section 94A, social security, and also equal opportunities, and notably the insertion in the Constitution of a provision concerning regional disparities and the offsetting of such disparities, the need for annual meetings on the amendment formula of the first ministers, federal and provincial, and the federal government proposal to get rid of the rights of denial and qualification.

I shall not read all of the new proposals that were made in March 1976, but there were two in particular which concerned the protection of the French language and culture within a new constitution. Again in January last, I included in a letter to the premiers a proposal to increase the number of senators from the various provinces, and proposals with respect to consultations prior to taking certain action.

I cannot list nor dwell on all those proposals, Mr. Speaker, but I believe that I have said enough to show that the myth of the status quo is truly a myth. There is not and there has not been any status quo. The Canadian constitution has incessantly been changed and made to adapt to reality and in the course of 8 or 9 years, we have suggested many changes to the so-called status quo. If anybody may be identified with the status quo, Mr. Speaker—and I say this with some regret—it may probably be the governments of Quebec, the present one in those that preceded it. We should remember that since Mackenzie King, the federal government has been looking for solutions for repatriating the constitution in Canada. Each time we have come close to finding one, that is a solution as suggested by a provincial government, such as the most recent ones, the Fulton-Favreau and the Victoria formulas. These were both developed at the request of Quebec government, and yet they were the ones who said no at the last moment, indicating that they preferred the status quo to the change that they themselves had suggested. We should therefore realize who represents the status quo in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

While I am on this subject, I would like to address myself to another cliché, that of the third option. Mr. Speaker, it has become somewhat fashionable to say: "I am not for the status quo, I am not for separatism, but there should be some compromise, a third option." I would simply like to warn my fellow-citizens not to fall into this trap, Mr. Speaker, because we never did invent this third option, the alternative to separatism and federalism—I am not saying status quo, but federalism. There is something called sovereignty association. I see that the Leader of the Opposition has something to say. Perhaps he could say it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what is meant by this association? Are they trying to square the circle or what? How can it be defined? Obviously, the PQ party could not and will not define it; so that the burden of the proof, if we fall into the trap of the third option, will not rest with the PQ party which will not take the responsibility to define the third option between independence and federalism, or to define the association of sovereignty. It will be up to us, federalists, to come up with a definition.