

This milestone in the evolution of Canada's government is the culmination of the series of discussions between the federal and provincial governments which began in 1950 and were carried on in 1960-61.

The communiqué ended with this paragraph:

The constitutional formula was recommended unanimously by the Attorneys-General of Canada and the provinces and accepted unanimously by the Conference.

There were pretty high hopes at that time. It was said that at last it looked as if we were making some progress. It was agreed—although this was not made a condition—that the provinces would submit to their legislatures a resolution endorsing the proposed amending formula, so that this would have not merely the concurrence of the executive arm of the provincial governments but also that of the people's representatives in the assemblies across Canada.

Some of the provinces carried out that step. I well recall that in the Legislature of Alberta I discussed this with the then leader of the Opposition. He willingly agreed to second the motion for the adoption of the resolution, when he saw that this would not be a partisan matter. I proposed the resolution of the Government, he seconded it, we had a good day's debate on it and it was carried unanimously. Something similar happened in other legislatures across Canada.

Honourable senators are aware of what transpired at that time. The Prime Minister of the Province of Quebec was the Honourable Mr. Lesage. He, along with all the others, had endorsed the proposed formula. I believe I can say he was enthusiastic about this progress. But when he went back to his own province he was met with criticism from his opposition that he had sold out to Ottawa and the rest of Canada.

This opposition became articulate and strong, until finally it was necessary for him to come back to the Government of Canada and advise that it would not be possible for him to take a resolution into his legislature asking for approval of the formula. The whole thing ended at that point. It was a deep disappointment to millions of Canadians. I am quite certain that the Prime Minister of Quebec was realistic in his assessment. There was no point in taking a resolution to his Assembly if the Assembly would not endorse it. He felt that such was the case.

Honourable senators, we have read in the press, and heard in the outline given so ably by Senator Connolly (Ottawa West), that again a constitutional conference recently arrived at the point where there is general agreement. Again, they have a means to domicile the Constitution in Canada, and again there is a proposed amending formula—not too different in its basic principles from that of 1964. In June of this year there is to be another conference, in British Columbia, at which it is expected this matter will be finalized. I sincerely hope that conference will be successful, but I wonder whether we are being realistic in such a hope. The present Prime

[Hon. Mr. Manning.]

Minister of Quebec, if I read the reports correctly, is facing the same kind of criticism with respect to this latest conference as his predecessor faced in 1964. This time he has not only the opposition of the Union Nationale which Prime Minister Lesage faced, but he has also the even stronger opposition of the separatist movement in the Province of Quebec.

I am wondering if it is realistic to think that Mr. Bourassa will be able to go to the conference in June and say: "I can take into my Legislature a resolution which will be adopted on behalf of the people of Quebec, and which will endorse this formula to domicile the British North America Act in Canada and to provide for its amendment." I hope he can, but I wonder if such will be the case.

If he has to go to the conference and say the same as Mr. Lesage had to say following the previous attempt, then I am very deeply concerned about what the reaction in this country may be. Several of the provincial governments have said already that if no progress is made towards finalizing this matter at the June conference, there is no point in pursuing the question further. Even more serious may be the reaction of the Canadian people. We cannot go on building up people's hopes time after time, and each time have them dashed.

I believe it is correct to say that during the years since the breakdown of the Fulton-Favreau formula there has been a long series of actions on the part of the Government and people of Canada to accommodate the desires and the aspirations of the Province of Quebec. We have had the Bilingualism and Biculturalism Commission, we have the Official Languages Act, and we have the provision of opting out privileges from federal-provincial agreements, with a choice of tax abatement or fiscal equivalent, as it was called. We have extensive programs of federal economic aid in which the people of Canada as a whole have contributed millions of dollars, the greater part of which has gone to try to build up the underdeveloped areas of the Province of Quebec.

I could add many more things to this list of which honourable senators are aware. Many of these have placed a heavy strain on the people in other regions of Canada. I do not want to digress into this matter tonight; perhaps on some other occasion we might discuss some of these things in greater detail. But I merely mention as a slight illustration of the effect of the Official Languages Act that in my part of Canada it is certainly having a more divisive effect than a unifying effect.

Some of you have read recent newspaper reports concerning a community in the north-central part of Alberta. Here French Canadian citizens and non-French Canadian citizens have lived and worked together in complete harmony and fellowship for years without the slightest disagreement. Now, because the B and B Commission has designated the area as a bilingual district, problems are beginning to develop. The people in the town happen to be predominantly French Canadian citizens while the people of the adjacent rural