

*The Constitution*

Victoria formula which would allow change to the amendments with the approval of Ontario, Quebec, two Atlantic provinces and two western provinces without opting-out privileges. If the permanent amending formula is finally reached, then annual federal-provincial conferences will take place in which the provinces, using the accepted formula, will finally make their contribution in adjustments to the Constitution to meet the particular needs of their provinces.

The goal of the present government is to have strong provincial legislatures to look after and supervise the needs of their particular regions but to have strong national government to speak for the nation.

I personally will always accept the right of a provincial government to exercise jurisdiction in regional matters, but I cannot agree to the country being run by a weak association of premiers. To accept anything less in the way of a central government is to betray an appalling lack of understanding of the new world order.

The world is entering the post-industrial phase, characterized by the emergence of assertive super states, global cartels and powerful multinational corporations. If Canada is to play its rightful role in the new economic scheme, it requires a strong federal system. It is folly to believe that a loose association of provinces can compete in this league. We must have a strong, wholesome government to design a national economic strategy and to meet the exigencies of the nation. We need a unified country if we are to have a significant and respected voice in world affairs.

There is some concern by the official opposition about the reliance of a people's referendum on constitutional change. The proposed amending formula contains the surest device which any democratic government can employ to resolve a deadlock. The majority of Canadians were pleased with the clear results of the most recent referendum. Once the Constitution is patriated, there will be no one to turn to in the even of an unresolved dispute between governments, except the people of Canada who elected both levels of government. The use of referenda instituted by the federal government or by the people of Canada is an appropriate vehicle to break a logjam in federal-provincial indecision. The referendum approach must always be used cautiously and prudently. The rules of implementation must be diligently followed in a non-partisan manner. Members opposite and dissenting premiers look at the referenda proposal suspiciously, as if it were a precursor to the imposition of a unitarian form of government. Such an inference is entirely without foundation.

One example which illustrates the historic division of powers and the critical role of a central government is the development of our health care service in Canada. As a medical doctor, the front line experience of practicing the art and science of surgery for some 30 years has given me a distinct perspective. I have seen the triumph of strong parliamentary democracy and federalism in the way the majority of Canadian citizens, medical institutions and governments have co-operated over the decades to establish a publicly financed health care system throughout the dominion.

In 1968, the national medical system was born with significant input from the medical profession and hospital services and provincial legislatures. The major co-ordinating effort or the driving force, however, came from the Pearson government which, through its initiative and funding, made the project possible. It was a strong, caring national government motivated by the needs of the people, applying the principle of equalization which made the project possible. An effective, strong central federal presence was necessary. There was no willingness on the part of the provinces to accept medicare, as the Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) said this afternoon.

A recent health service review, headed by special commissioner Justice Emmett Hall, indicated that our Canadian health care system is, by world standards, one of the very best in existence today. Besides maintaining the vitality of the nation, it has the additional function of preserving the right of all citizens to enjoy unimpeded mobility throughout the dominion, a right which is often overlooked in the constitution of other democratic states. Whenever a resident moves from one point to another, he or she is assured of medical care in Canada. The national interest was served by a strong federal government. This system will be seriously at risk, if provinces are given opting out privileges in the constitutional proposals under the amending formula put forth by the eight premiers and our Conservative colleagues. I might make the observation that it is also at risk if physicians are not allowed to continue opting out privileges. The evolution of our health care system was not a historical accident; it was a culmination of a national priority.

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The Canadian Medical Association was established in Quebec the same year as the British North America Act. While the terms of the act gave the province jurisdiction over health and education, doctors at that time crossed provincial boundaries in order to advance nationwide standards for medical certification.

There is a historical note which I would like to add. Parliament in that era was blessed with a much higher ratio of medical doctors to other professions and trades in the House. A staunch Cumberland Conservative member, Sir Charles Tupper, was the first president of the Canadian Medical Association. In recalling the past, I trust that he will be remembered more for that moment than for the fleeting distinction of having served as a prime minister of Canada in a Conservative government, which was in power for an even shorter period than the recent Conservative regime.

In 1920, again under the umbrella of the federal government, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons was founded and charged with the mandate to oversee education of medical specialities and to stimulate research in medicare on a national basis.

This challenge has nurtured and supported advances in the art and science of medicine. Let me list the names of a few Canadian medical pioneers and their discoveries: Wilder Pen-