

carry out the programs to which parliament and the provincial governments have agreed in this field.

• (1730)

I would not object at all to greater delegation, either formally or otherwise, of the administrative powers of government to the provincial legislatures but such delegations and such revisions to our constitution should not be carried out at the expense of creating an ineffective federal government at the centre. We cannot preserve our country on that basis.

The same is true, in my judgment, with regard to economic development, efforts to reduce provincial disparity, and so on. It was proposed not only in the Victoria Charter but also by the Joint Committee on the Constitution, of which the hon. member for Windsor-Walkerville (Mr. MacGuigan) was the chairman, that these objectives should be included in a preamble to the constitution. This was the view of the joint committee, a very representative committee composed of senators and members of the House of Commons and which listened to people from all over Canada. They said—and this is not inconsistent with what the hon. member has proposed—that a preamble ought to be provided in the constitution to include these and other items which are basic to the future of our country, and I suggest it might be done in that way.

I said there was one part of the resolution of which I cannot approve. It is the last paragraph. I am not sure whether I have misunderstood the hon. member for Egmont, but what the words seemed to say is that the parliament in the United Kingdom should amend the act only when it has received a formal request from the legislatures and governments of the provinces to amend the act. It may well be that the hon. member was thinking only of these particular changes, but this touches on a very definite subject, and that is the whole question of the formulas of amendment and, indeed, the other question of repatriation of the constitution.

I do not believe there are many hon. members who are not of the opinion that we should have our constitution made into a totally Canadian document. This would involve not only patriation but many changes in the terms and expressions contained in the document.

In the joint committee report on the Constitution of Canada to which I have just referred, it is well pointed out, in my view, that a constitution ought to be an inspiration and a mirror for the community as well as an instrument calling for the distribution of powers and that, of these two ends, it is the inspirational role which is the more important. That is very true.

We do need, as the report recommends, a new constitution, though getting a new constitution means following a long, rocky road. What the hon. member proposes is fine, but in the last paragraph he seems to be harking back to the formula known as the Fulton-Favreau formula originally proposed by Mr. Fulton, a former minister of justice, and later revived by Guy Favreau, when he in turn became minister of justice. We, as well as the government of Saskatchewan, most strenuously objected to that formula, the reason being that it created an element of rigidity. It gave a veto to every single province, the

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power to veto and—I use this word hesitantly when we are talking about such august bodies—even to blackmail the federal government and the other provinces. The wording of the last paragraph seems to me to revive that proposition. The paragraph does not actually refer to the parliament of Canada at all. It does, however, refer to a formal request from the legislature and governments of the provinces, all of them, presumably.

One of the things the Victoria Charter was able to accomplish, and I think it was a great advance, was to provide for an amending formula which got away from the straitjacket by providing that the majority of the provinces, consisting of a certain combination of provinces, was sufficient to approve changes in the constitution. Of course the approval of the federal parliament was also necessary. I do not suppose the hon. member will have another opportunity to return to this subject, but I hope that if he does he will be able to explain this paragraph to my satisfaction. I do not believe it is central to the main thrust of his resolution and, for that reason, I intend to support the resolution, though with the quite serious reservation I have expressed as to the last paragraph.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Bussières (Portneuf): Mr. Speaker, as previous members have done, I would like first of all to congratulate the hon. member for Egmont (Mr. MacDonald) for giving us the opportunity to discuss the constitution and another extremely interesting problem, namely economic and regional disparities.

I am also interested in another aspect of this resolution: what is called the Victoria charter. This subject is important because it is an historical event in the life of our country. I am convinced that if an agreement had been reached at the constitutional conference of Victoria, the pressures we are now experiencing would have been greatly reduced.

What amazes me is that the hon. member for Egmont retained only one aspect of it—article 7 of the Victoria charter. He emphasized this afternoon the importance he attached to it, due to the consensus obtained on that article by the representatives of various governments. However, I think other articles of this charter are extremely important and that some kind of agreement has been reached by those who took part in this conference. For instance, article 1 which deals with political rights, would bring within a constitutional instrument all the basic rights of the Canadian people. I feel it is important that these be included in the constitution.

Article 2 dealing with linguistic rights, and while I think it is of utmost importance to make sure that all individuals and all areas in Canada have equality of opportunity on the economic level, I feel it is also very important to recognize the equality of opportunity for all, no matter the language spoken. And I can say, Mr. Speaker, that there are still some Francophones in my province who feel they are not getting the same opportunities—and I am not talking here about air traffic controllers or air pilots. I feel therefore that this second article was also very important.