

● (1530)

Having heard the evidence and recommendations of no fewer than 97 interested groups, having received 1280 briefs, having held 104 sittings and debated the resolution during 263 hours, the Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons presented to Parliament a proposed resolution improved by 82 amendments which in many cases greatly enhance the situation and the dignity of all Canadians. And so it is that Parliament today is studying a constitutional proposal which at long last will free Canada from the final remnant of the colonial era and proclaim the full sovereignty of the Canadian people. We now have before Parliament a charter of rights and freedoms which will guarantee at last the basic freedoms and the democratic rights of all Canadians everywhere in Canada.

At long last Parliament is considering an amendment formula which henceforth will enable the provinces to have their say about the changes to be made to our Constitution in the future. This amendment formula once rallied near unanimity in Victoria ten years ago and, as my colleague for Hochelaga-Maisonneuve (Mr. Joyal) indicated, it will confirm the partnership status of the provincial governments and grant them the authority to propose and approve any change which might affect their powers. This amendment formula will at last enable us to break free from the constitutional impasse in which the rule of unanimity has kept us for 54 years. As recently as last week, Mr. Speaker, I entertained the hope that the eight dissenting premiers would propose an amending formula that could form the basis of future negotiations.

Today however, I must confess my great disappointment in the face of this proposal which I think is a backwards step compared to all the hard work done by Parliament over these long months of debate. Not only do the eight opposing premiers reject the idea of entrenching a charter of rights applicable to all Canadians into the Constitution, but their amending formula includes an opting out provision for any province that is dissatisfied with an amendment. Is that the way to build a nation? Is that the way to Canadian unity?

[English]

An editorial in this weekend's *Citizen* summed up the position of the eight provinces very well. It reads as follows:

A constitution is not a constitution unless it binds the elements of a nation together.

The unlimited opting out provision, the absence of an equalization guarantee and the exclusion of a deadlock-breaking mechanism combine to make this accord not an exercise in nation building, but rather a blueprint for nation wrecking.

[Translation]

That is where the so-called heroic filibustering by the official opposition in the last few weeks has brought us. That is the result of the trade-offs to which the Prime Minister agreed in a last ditch effort to gain provincial agreement for his proposal. Both the government and the official opposition have

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found unacceptable the proposal made by the eight dissenting premiers. The Minister of Justice (Mr. Chrétien) qualified it as "incremental sovereignty-association" and in an interview last week the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) indicated his disappointment with the provincial proposal. That is why, Mr. Speaker, we must stop fooling ourselves with the rule of unanimity and accept the fact that the time for sterile discussions is over and the time to act is now. Parliament has before it a proposal for an over-all constitutional reform which I believe satisfies the aspirations of Quebecers who rejected on May 20 of last year the nebulous proposal of the P.Q. government. Although they re-elected the same government last week, these Quebecers forced that party to abandon any possible move aimed at changing Quebec's status within the Canadian federation.

In this way, Quebecers have clearly shown in my opinion that they want federalism, renewed federalism which will provide them and all Canadians with the opportunity to develop fully in this land of plenty that is Canada with guaranteed rights and freedoms. However, even with all the good will in the world, this proposal could never satisfy all expectations. It especially does not satisfy the insatiable appetite of the provincial governments who consider the federal government's initiative an attempt at interference with their fields of jurisdiction. Quebec fears encroachment, among other things, in the area of education. It is important in that regard, Mr. Speaker, to consider the demographic situation in order to fully understand the scope of the education related provisions contained in the proposed resolution. In an interesting demographic study published in *La Presse* last October 18, Jean Poulain states, and I quote:

... the latest data show that in less than 15 years, over 600,000 Quebecers left their province to take up residence elsewhere.

This year alone, according to statistics just released by the Canadian Association of Movers, Quebec ranks first among the provinces for the number of families moving to other provinces, with 54,056 people. Mr. Speaker, these 650,000 Quebecers who have moved to other Canadian provinces are mostly francophones. Every year, they join the hundreds of thousands of other francophones outside Quebec throughout the country who have no constitutional guarantee that they can fulfil themselves in what is nevertheless one of the two official languages of our country. Mr. Speaker, wherever they live, these francophones have the right to use their own language, just as the linguistic rights of the anglophone minority are respected in Quebec. For this reason and because the phenomenon of interprovincial migration is now a fact of life in Canada, I consider fully justified the entrenchment in our Constitution of the provisions concerning minority language rights and minority language educational rights.

Indeed, if mobility is to characterize our future Canadian society, it is incumbent on us to entrench immediately in our Constitution safeguards to ensure the respect of the cultural