

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1620)

Mr. Clark: Of course, we shall be voting for that, even though it is tied to a so-called "aboriginal rights" clause which merely requires the provinces to approve amendments to aboriginal rights.

What of the official Liberal amendments? Because of our assistance and insistence, particularly that of the hon. member for Provencher, they are grudgingly putting the word "God" in the preamble to the charter. Not with the eloquent and inspiring wording from the Diefenbaker Bill of Rights, with accompanying references in that document, but not in this one, to "the dignity and worth of the human person and the position of the family in a society of free individuals and free institutions", but instead, words inserted as an afterthought. This is what I find especially reprehensible: they are saying we can have a little bit of God if we accept their amending formula.

They ask us to join them in making 70 per cent of the people of western Canada—the population of Alberta and B.C.—irrelevant so far as constitutional amendments are concerned.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: They want us to join them in making those provinces third class in exchange for a reference to God. There is a better way to reflect the supremacy of God in the Constitution of Canada, and that is to accept the amendments in the name of my colleague, the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker). That package respects both God and the federal system. That is the way we should proceed in the Canadian Parliament.

The amendments which we put forward give proper recognition to the sovereignty of God, the worth of the person and, which is very important, the position of the family in a society of free individuals. The government rejects that approach. It rejects enshrining the right of Canadians to enjoy property.

It wants to allow the courts to decide conscience questions for Canadians. It wants the courts to be free to bar Canadians from deciding laws on capital punishment and abortion. For months the government has talked about the tyranny of unanimity and has practised the tyranny of unilateral action. In the amendments we have put forward, we have offered them a reasonable definition of consensus which we would join with them in supporting, a definition which includes seven provinces representing at least half the people of Canada, acting in concert with the Parliament of Canada. But the government is not interested in that. It is not interested because it does not want a Constitution or a charter of rights that anybody but the Liberals write. It deliberately keeps the charter hostage to a divisive process. It is trying to trade off rights for an amending formula.

When the eight premiers met in Ottawa they all dropped their packages and their conditions. The Liberal government does not want to drop its conditions. A Quebec government

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finally agreed to patriation but the government says, "who cares?". The government wants its agenda in its way, in its time. We will have nothing to do with a process of that kind which is wrong. It is a process which is deeply wrong and is deeply divisive. This government's preference and guiding star is to proceed unilaterally. It rejects proposals which respect the history and nature of Canada.

The government invents new phrases to condemn the enduring reality of a diverse Canada. If "checkerboard" means that different standards apply at different times, at different places, that has always been the case in Canada. That, indeed, was the political principle that allowed medicare to begin in this country. The same principle allows Quebec to enjoy a different pension plan, allows Newfoundland to have a school system different from that of British Columbia, and Ontario a system different from that of Quebec. Some of those differences date from before confederation; others, such as the Newfoundland school system, were specific conditions of entry into confederation. Of course there are differences in Canada. That is our history. That is our nature. To condemn it is to condemn Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: Indeed, one of the most alarming elements of this highly centralist Liberal position is the underlying assumption that difference is dangerous. The Fathers of Confederation believed the opposite when they wrote a Constitution which protected local identities. So did the British parliament well before confederation when it wrote laws which guaranteed the distinct identity of the French Canadian society in Quebec. So do those of us who today celebrate the excitement of multiculturalism, which is the incarnation of difference or respect for diversity, or those of us who cheerfully work to learn a second official language.

The Prime Minister and his colleagues like to suggest that they speak for Canada against the provinces. In fact, they speak for official Ottawa against Canada. The Prime Minister and the little clique that advises him will sometime learn, I hope, that there is a Canada beyond Ottawa, a Canada beyond official bilingualism, a Canada beyond a charter of rights. It is a Canada of diversity and emotion, of innovation and of proud identities. Those Canadians cannot all be shaped into the same mould. Mr. Speaker, they should not be, because were they so shaped they would lose the essence and value of this great and unique nation.

Our speeches are limited to 30 minutes in this debate, but there is one brief theme that I want to touch on because this has been one other common theme in our history. I refer to the need to have a national feeling that unites us. We know that laws are not enough to unite Canadians; there has to be a feeling of nationality. It is one of the most bitter of ironies that the means the Liberals have chosen with which to impose the centralist view has weakened the Canadian feeling of common nationality. A Constitution which should have been the source of Canadians coming together and growing proud together has instead become the source of division in this country. That is