

Edward Island, most of whom were in England. They wanted that buying out for the benefit of the tenant farmers. They wanted a guarantee of communications with the mainland. The proposed intercolonial railway was great for Nova Scotia and New Brunswick but meant little to Islanders. None of these terms were promised in the resolution drawn up in Quebec City, despite talk of putting them in, so the island watched and waited, passing up confederation in 1867, but eventually joining the country in 1873 when the time seemed right—and on their own terms as well.

Among other concessions, the dominion government advanced \$800,000 to the Island for the purpose of buying out the absentee land owners. The Island received a sum equivalent to \$50 per head of its population, and a continuous steamer service between the island and the mainland was established and maintained.

Although Nova Scotia and New Brunswick joined confederation in 1867, they too agreed to the union only when their terms were agreed to. The maritime provinces, then as now, wanted to ensure that the peculiar economic needs of the region would be provided for. They wanted to retain control over matters that would allow them to preserve their local characters and institutions.

Today as we deal with the issue of constitutional patriation, Prince Edward Island and the other provinces do not want to give up or be denied the rights and terms which were agreed to in a spirit of co-operation over 100 years ago at the time of confederation. The failure of the federal government to agree with its partners, the provinces, concerns me very deeply. The federal government is seeking arbitrarily to alter the traditional relationship between the federal government and the provinces as well as substantially change the nature of our democratic institutions.

The Constitution is a public social contract which embodies the terms upon which Canadians agreed to live together in a spirit of national community. It sets forward the basic agreements for Canadians to live together. These agreements must be arrived at upon consent, for without such consent, they are deprived of their own legitimacy. The problem facing Canada is essentially a problem of agreeing on terms which will permit Canadians to live in a state of harmony with one another.

● (2010)

Canada is a federation of both provinces and a federal government and was designed by the Fathers of Confederation in this way, in the knowledge that our nation would be impossible to govern as a unitary state. We are also a country of regions, proud of our individual traditions but also of our sense of national community.

In a country as diverse as ours, Mr. Speaker, there always have been and will continue to be political tensions between certain regions and the federal government. This is inescapable because Canadians have both loyalty to the region in which they live and to the country as a whole. These tensions and concerns which besiege us demand the necessary political compromises. There is absolutely no hesitation or doubt in the

minds of Canadians that the Constitution should be our own, passed by our own Parliament and resting in our own country. But we do not want the federal government to act unilaterally on this matter with such far-reaching implications affecting all provinces.

We hope the crisis and turmoil generated by the federal government and its constitutional proposals will help all of us focus on our vision of Canada and what we need to make this a better country. We hope we can work together to build a new Constitution of which we can be proud; a Constitution that protects our individual and cultural uniqueness, provincial diversities and national potential.

Our national institutions, such as the Senate and the Supreme Court, need revising. The division of powers between provincial and federal governments needs to be clarified. Our individual rights could be better protected. All we require is a sincere desire and a process through which we can work together toward these common goals. Ottawa alone has no right to amend our Constitution without the agreement of the provincial legislatures.

My major objection to the government's proposals is the manner in which the federal government is acting alone to permanently change the nature of Canada, overriding the wishes of most of the provinces and of the vast majority of Canadians. To proceed in the manner proposed ignores the objections voiced by the provincial governments. What we have before us is a leader of a regional political party with only regional representation in Parliament imposing, unilaterally, an amended Constitution that will change the structure and basis of confederation.

People have joined together in confederation so they would have control over a common destiny. Now the federal government, unilaterally, is attempting to take away that spirit of compromise and sharing which built confederation, and impose its control over our destiny. Confederation has worked for Canada for 113 years. Certainly it has had its problems, its strains and its tension, but it has allowed Canadians the opportunity to build one of the strongest, most independent and freest countries in the world. One might justifiably wonder how long the proposed new Canadian Constitution would be able to maintain that state.

I was somewhat encouraged when the government accepted changes to the proposed amending formula. Under the original constitutional package, two maritime provinces forming 50 per cent of the population of the region were needed to introduce changes to the Constitution. Because of the Island's small population, this would have left us without a voice, and would have eliminated Prince Edward Island from ever having a say in constitutional matters. The amended proposal would require the approval of any two Atlantic provinces, enabling the Island to unite with any other Atlantic province to introduce changes, permitting Prince Edward Island to have a voice in constitutional decision making.

However, this amendment to the constitutional package, along with the others, is just a marginal improvement; sugar on the pill, so to speak. The concessions are not enough. Prince