

The Constitution

that so-called fair system, then it will go over the heads of the people with a referendum? I just cannot emphasize too much how that particular provision and that approach are offensive to western Canada and, quite possibly, to other places. For the life of me I do not know why they are necessary.

I can argue about the Victoria formula or some other formula. I prefer a formula which does not make first-class and second-class promises. I can live with a veto where there are cultural matters to defend when a minority population is involved, but how can the government and the NDP members from British Columbia ask us to go along with something which makes second-class citizens of British Columbians, changes profoundly the balance of power in this country and puts in the hands of the federal government a referendum which only the federal government can use?

Ten provinces could come to the federal government and say they have decided what is in the interests of this country, but they cannot adopt it because the federal government will not let them. I ask hon. members to think about this. If Section 45, the Victoria formula, is fair—and I do not think it is—and if the government thinks it fair, why does it need a referendum? That referendum proposal is causing an awful lot of trouble out west because it is seen as giving a central government power it never had before and power it does not need unless it is after something.

An hon. Member: Resource control.

Mr. Fraser: I want to point out something else. My hon. friends in the NDP from British Columbia make much of the fact that they do not like the amending formula we have proposed. They say there would be too many formulas and too many things left unanswered. My point is that my friends in the NDP are not voting for our formula, but apparently they are prepared to vote for the government's formula.

Let us take a look at what the federal government formula does. It is not just Section 45 and the referendum; it is more complicated than that. There are too many formulas in the government proposal. Let us take a look at Section 36, which requires unanimity for two years. Let us take a look at Section 45, which is the Victoria formula. There could be a provincial alternative to the Victoria formula and another formula for tabling of that alternative. I refer hon. members to Section 42(1). There could be a federal alternative to the Victoria formula, and we would have no way of knowing what it was. I refer hon. members to Section 42(3)(a). There could be a referendum to decide between the federal proposal and the provincial proposal. Again I refer hon. members back to Section 41. There could be a permanent alternative formula and amendment by referendum. In that respect I refer to Section 46. If we look at the sections carefully we see there are six amending formulas contained in the government proposal.

Some of my friends on the government side look at me incredulously. I ask them to get themselves a lawyer or, if they are lawyers, put on their glasses and read the sections because that is what they show.

My hon. friends, especially my friends in the New Democratic Party, say they cannot go along with the Conservative amending formula because it might take too long. Just look at the delays involved in the government proposal. Unanimity would prevail for two years. Again I refer to Section 36. At the end of that two-year period failure to agree on an amending formula would result in recourse to a referendum. Just so that it will be on the record, I refer hon. members to Section 42(3); that referendum would be held within another two years during which time unanimity would still prevail. After the referendum had determined which formula would apply, the federal option or the provincial option, then six months would pass before the successful option would be proclaimed and put into place. That opens up the potential of four and a half to nearly five years of delay. How can NDP members from the province of British Columbia vote for that proposal and say they will not vote for ours?

Their argument was ably made by the hon. member for Burnaby, and this afternoon by the hon. member for New Westminster-Coquitlam. They do not care whether this leaves British Columbia in a second-class position. They do not care whether that provision of a referendum is driving the west away from the centre—and Quebec too, if we listen to what Mr. Ryan and Mr. Levesque say. The hon. members to whom I have referred do not care about that kind of division. They have so little faith that we could ever come to some agreement on a charter of rights they are prepared to go along with a formula which sells their province out. They will pay the price. Mr. Nystrom makes no mistake, not by a long shot. Mr. Nystrom and three others understand the west.

Mr. Knowles: Order.

Mr. Fraser: I am sorry. I mean the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom). I apologize to the hon. member and to other hon. members. The hon. member for Yorkton-Melville saw what this is. He pointed this out in the first speech he made in the House weeks and weeks ago. I ask that people listen to some of these members.

I would like to read some comments into the record. This is directed not only to government members but also to members of the New Democratic Party. Let me read what Stephen Lewis said. Mr. Lewis is the very respected former leader of the New Democratic Party in the province of Ontario. He said:

But at the final level there are those who argue, from Joe Clark to Allan Blakeney, from René Lévesque to Lorne Nystrom that Pierre Trudeau's dogmatic unilateral insistence is doing such terrible damage to the country that the constitutional package just isn't worth it, not even with the charter.

He went on:

In personal terms, that is the roughest argument for me to cope with. I detest the petty provincialism of a number of the premiers.

He is tough on them.

I see nothing particularly noble in the ruckusness of the federal Tories.

He does not pat us on the back.

I am even disappointed in . . . Premier Blakeney. But as bad as all of that is I do believe that the federal Liberal behaviour is even worse, that we are doing