

### *The Constitution*

ans from coast to coast, because that is becoming very important to this Parliament. That, indeed, as we all know, is a formidable task.

[*Translation*]

The constitution of a country covers everybody. It is the source of great emotional reactions on the part of serious citizens because it forces us to take into consideration the future and the full political independence of our nation and give them prominence.

● (2010)

[*English*]

As a fourth generation Canadian from Northern Ireland I have always leaned very strongly toward the true spirit of Canadian nationalism. I had the distinct privilege of growing up on a small farm in the western end of Victoria County in the central part of Ontario. I had an uncle who went west and became one of the campaign managers for the late right hon. gentleman from Prince Albert—

**Mr. Epp:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Hopkins:**—who, when I came into this House, asked where I happened to go astray. My father and mother in Victoria County, like many of yours, were hardworking, honest and kindhearted with the very limited resources available to them. I need not tell you after whom that particular county was named.

My wonderful mother, whose first name is Victoria, is well into her eighties and still going strong. Other names in that community called Argyle were Ross, McFadden, Currie, McAlpine, McEachern and McArthur, McPherson, Burton, Moore, McLeod, Campbell, McIntyre and I do not know how the Irish got in there.

I moved at an early age to eastern Ontario and found myself in the middle of an almost totally German-speaking community in Renfrew County. I was faced with a small grade one class that spoke only German and I spoke only English, and the grade three's were the interpreters between the teacher and the grade one class, so I knew what a language barrier was long before I came to Parliament. Just a short distance away was a large area settled by Canadians of Polish descent who spoke Polish in everyday conversation, and most still do. The little hamlet of Wilno in the northern part of Renfrew County is the oldest Polish settlement in Canada, about 116 years old.

Therefore, my experience with Canadians from origins other than English and French came very early in my life, and added experiences since then have given me a tremendous impression of our multicultural groups in Canada. They are proud Canadians and are a national force for cementing Canadian unity. The Polish Alliance of Canada was founded in 1907 and, while I stand to be corrected, I think it is the oldest ethno-cultural minority organization in the history of Canada. Clause 27, which is of interest to all multicultural groups, says: This charter shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians.

Along with other members of this chamber, it has been my privilege to meet and get to know on a very personal basis, loyal, sincere and hardworking Canadians from all walks of life who have enriched Canada with their multicultural talents and contributions.

[*Translation*]

As a long-time resident of the Ottawa Valley I have met people and developed personal friendships with thousands of French-speaking Canadians. Since I first came to this House I have enriched my life by joining several francophone members and senators and working with them. They have always been very understanding and very patient with me.

[*English*]

It is obvious to every Canadian that the writing and amending of a constitution does not come easily. The two volumes written by Donald Creighton on Sir John A. Macdonald illustrate many of the difficulties he had in those early days. We have only to look at the Americans who had to revise their constitution 12 years after they wrote it.

We know as time goes on life becomes more complex, and it becomes more difficult to amend constitutions. It is fair to say that only those who take major steps in history get things done. They are embattled and criticized, but conviction and a deep desire for achievement is worthless unless acted upon.

There are many who will say we are breaking new ground. That is not really so in this debate. The history of Canada, since day one, is dotted with constitutional debate of one kind or another. It should not be considered a remarkable achievement that the provinces and the federal government decided in 1931 to leave our Constitution in Britain without an amending formula. It is very easy to agree to do nothing. Our desire to bring the Constitution home today is a real challenge, and anyone who says that simply bringing it home without an amending formula and a charter of rights and freedoms is taking the easy way. They are correct, that is the easy way, but that does not come to grips with the key problem of the amending formula and charter of rights and freedoms. Those who suggest this are simply postponing the provision of an amending formula until a later date and that battle could drag on for many weeks or months.

The proposed resolution provides that for a period of two years from patriation, amendments will require unanimous consent of Parliament and the provinces until an amending formula is agreed upon using one of three methods and, while these are well known to the members of this House, I wish to put them on the record.

If, during the next two years, federal and provincial governments can reach unanimous agreement on a formula, it will be adopted. To facilitate agreement, a first ministers' constitutional conference will be held each year until a formula is implemented.

If the provinces and the federal government fail to agree unanimously on a formula, but seven or more provinces, representing at least 80 per cent of the total population of all the provinces, agree within two years after patriation on an