

The Address—Mr. MacGuigan

Mr. MacGuigan: I was unfavourably struck by a comment this week with respect to this decision by Mr. Paul Caouette, the executive director of the Solicitor General's component of the PSAC. He was reported by the *Globe and Mail* of October 20, at page 10, as saying: "How could anyone think of joining the penitentiary service knowing they will face civil actions against them?" I should like to tell Mr. Caouette that people in all walks of life always face the possibility of civil actions being taken against them—and criminal actions, too, if they are not prepared to follow norms of conduct usually accepted—if they are not prepared to use only reasonable force. I would hope there would be no exception for prison guards, for policemen or anyone else in the conduct of their duties. This decision, the first of its kind in Canada, would be an excellent means—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I regret to interrupt the hon. member but the time allotted to him has expired.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Carry on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: However, at the beginning of his remarks I understood there was general agreement that he might carry on. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. MacGuigan: I thank the House, Mr. Speaker, and I shall pass on to my third and last subject, which is that of national solidarity. I propose to treat it briefly under the three headings: structure, strategy, and spirit.

First, with respect to structure. The report of the Special Joint Committee on the Constitution of Canada, which was presented in March, 1972, has stood up very well over the years. I believe that only two modifications need to be made to that report in order to make it entirely relevant to the situation today, both a further spelling out of certain things which at that time were not as apparent as they are now. We did not then feel it necessary, because of the provision which already existed in the constitution with respect to immigration, to spell out further details in this area. That should be done and, indeed, the Minister of Employment (Mr. Cullen) is co-operating with ministers in the provincial governments to try to work out just such an arrangement.

The other area is that of communications. Here again, further specification is needed. With those two additions, I think the report of that committee, one which the government has been following for the last five years although it has not had the opportunity for introducing it to a full scale constitutional conference, is most applicable. It advocates a great deal of decentralization. But it also recognizes there must be some centralization and that to some extent there must be an exchange of powers when we have constitutional changes.

I do not anticipate radical structural changes. I do not think they are desirable. Nor do I think they are necessary, because it seems to me that where there are active provincial governments, where there are provinces which take full advantage of their power, there is not a great need for constitutional change.

[Mr. MacGuigan.]

Such governments can do almost all that needs to be done for the people of their provinces, and on this premise I do not think we need constitutional changes in order to bring about changes in political life in those parts of the country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacGuigan: The other condition is that of fuller consultation by the federal government. The federal government has begun this, as it has indeed begun the decentralization of our federal services. Consultation is extremely important. The various areas of the country must be made to feel that they are being consulted, and this brings me to our recommendation with respect to the Senate, which was to increase that body to give more representation to western Canada, and also to change the method of appointment. But in general we do not need radical structural changes; we do need some changes and they are spelled out in this report.

● (1702)

At the moment, strategy is of more importance than the structure itself. It seems to me that there is a lot of naiveté in English-speaking Canada about what the Parti Quebecois is about in Quebec. Surely in the light of recent statements by ministers of that government it is no longer very necessary to persuade public opinion of what the PQ government is about. Claude Morin, on March 19, said that the PQ government was committed to independence and did not believe that any constitutional reform within confederation could meet the province's demands. He also said that there would be no possibility of any constitutional discussions before the referendum. Mr. Levesque on October 19 said the same thing, that before the referendum constitutional discussion with other parts of Canada could take place only on the basis of the Parti Quebecois proposal of political sovereignty combined with economic association, hardly a very palatable basis for the rest of us.

The PQ strategy is the plebiscite or referendum. We must have an answering strategy. Here part of the answer was given by the Prime Minister this week when he spoke about the possible necessity for a referendum. I am pleased, by the way, that the hon. member for Surrey-White Rock (Mr. Friesen), who I am sorry is no longer in the House, introduced my position on this with so much fanfare. I owe it to him that he read enough of my remarks from the previous occasion to indicate that I did say that there could be a referendum when our very system itself was at stake. I am not sure he appreciated the significance of those words, but what I was saying then is precisely what the Prime Minister is advocating now. When the country's government or the country's future itself is at stake, a referendum, of course, can be extremely appropriate. It was matters of ordinary policy which I was suggesting should not be taken from parliament and handled by way of referendum.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!