

The Constitution

our job as representatives of British Columbia to see if we can make it possible. In any event, I remind the House that there is an opportunity in the two years following the patriation of the Constitution for us to get cracking, put forward our alternative amending formula and try to do a selling job on other parts of the country.

In conclusion, I emphasize how important the whole process has been, particularly the hearings of the constitutional committee which allowed, permitted and encouraged Canadians in all walks of life to have an input in the charter of human rights. As Canadians I think we can all be incredibly proud of that achievement.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Miss Jewett: It is for this reason we all know in our hearts that this charter, particularly the amendments as a result of the input of the people of Canada, and the amendments we still hope will be made, is a charter created by Canadians.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Gimaiel (Lac-Saint-Jean): Mr. Speaker, may I first be allowed to say how happy I am to see the hon. member for Madawaska-Victoria (Mr. Corbin) occupy the chair, and I hope that the people of the Madawaska Republic will appreciate the fact that it is the duty of their representative to make sure that our standing orders are being observed.

I will now come to the heart of the matter, Mr. Speaker. I feel privileged to have the opportunity to discuss today in the House a matter of the utmost importance for our country, for all its inhabitants and perhaps still more for our children. This great debate on the Canadian constitution began some years ago. We have now reached the stages of implementation. A great many things have been said throughout the years, but very few things have been done. This government has now decided that the time has come to set in motion the appropriate mechanisms which will enable our count to renew itself and to continue to be one of the finest countries in the world. It is obvious that this debate could be lengthy. Presently, we are considering an amendment dealing with the referendum introduced by the official opposition. This amendment, as many others which could be moved by that same party, is only an excuse to extend the debate.

I cannot say that I have any complaint about that, Mr. Speaker, because as the debate proceeds we get to know the different positions held by the various parties in the House. The clearer the positions, the better we can see what hon. members really have in mind. This is important, because a country consists of a group of human beings living in a specific geographic area, goodwill and good relations rather than confrontations are essential among its inhabitants whatever their differences may be. I have to add, however, Mr. Speaker, that I am extremely disappointed by comments I heard in the House because they pained and shocked me but the more I

consider them, the more they pain me rather than shock me. I am referring to the statements made last evening in the House by the hon. member for Simcoe South (Mr. Stewart). I would like to quote a few. Here is what one can read in the official English version of *Hansard* on page 7858, and I quote:

Many of my colleagues have pointed out the history of this great Canada: the Quebec act of 1774, the constitutional act of 1791 and Lord Durham's report. They recognized the fact that the Quebec act and the constitutional act gave to French Canadians rights which were the most enlightened of their time. Unfortunately, no one pointed out that the Durham report recommended the union of Upper and Lower Canada and the use of one federal language, English. Had this been adhered to, we would not be having this acrimonious debate in the House today.

I shuddered when I heard those first words, but when we think about it we realize that there is room for interpretation. So I said to myself that perhaps the hon. member did not mean what he said. A few lines further I read another sentence and that one meant a lot of things:

The bilingualism and biculturalism policies of this government have served only to act as an abrasive in English-speaking Canada.

I heard those words spoken here in the House where 284 sitting members represent millions of Canadians in the best interest of each and every one of our fellow citizens, and in all serenity. I heard those words spoken here in this House.

An hon. Member: Unbelievable!

Mr. Gimaiel: It is sheer nonsense!

Did one French-speaking member in this House recall all the hardships which francophones have had to put up with in this country over the past 100 years? Canada is a beautiful and great country because there were men who could understand one another. Some francophones have made tremendous sacrifices to be Canadians. That is why our country was built in harmony and with understanding and mutual respect, and I know that anglophones as well had a part to play, I know that there were anglophones who worked hard to build this country. I also know that they have shown respect for their French-speaking fellow citizens, but I think that in the debate we are holding now there is no room for nasty political partisanship, particularly when it smacks of racism, if we are to concentrate on building the country. I would be interested to hear the hon. member for Simcoe South say that he was voicing the opinion of all his constituents when he spoke in the House last night. I am sure that such is not the case and I would point out to him and to some of his colleagues that when he has the floor in the House he is not expressing the views of the Progressive Conservative Party but those of hundreds of thousands of people whom he represents here. That is his job and that is what he is paid for. I want to quote another sentence, and that one does not leave room for interpretation:

National bilingualism is unnatural, undesirable, unwelcome and it is one of the central causes of national disunity.

We hear those words which bring us back to the days of Lord Durham who had been sent to Canada by England so he