

*The Constitution*

provincial conferences. Indeed, this resolution will give us our own Canadian constitution with a charter of rights and freedoms and the entrenchment of the equalization principle. In fact, a unanimous vote in this House last May expressed agreement to bring home the constitution.

Last Thursday the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) spoke of the tyranny of unanimity when he declared:

Unanimity gave each first minister a veto: and that veto was increasingly used to seek the particular good of a particular region or province. So we achieved the good of none; least of all did we achieve the good of all, the common good.

We were led by the dictates of unanimity to bargain freedom against fish—

I happen to be a defender of both. The Prime Minister went on to state:

—fundamental rights against oil, the independence of our country against long distance telephone rates. But we were led further still, towards a radically new concept of Canada, one in which the national good was merely the sum total of provincial demands—

*[Translation]*

Mr. Speaker, this is precisely the deadlock which must be broken. But while taking this first step, and it is only the beginning, we should serve first not the governments, whether federal or provincial, but the citizens in this country by giving them inalienable fundamental rights. Indeed if we draw up the list of those rights, we see that it is impressive: freedom of conscience and religion, freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression including freedom of press and other media of information, freedom of association, democratic rights, mobility rights anywhere in the country, minority language educational rights, legal rights, non-discrimination rights, language rights in Parliament and too many others to be mentioned.

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not reflect on one of the rights that the new charter would guarantee, namely, the right to education in the minority language where the number warrants.

You will understand that my view reflects the history of my ancestors, the Acadians, and my experience as a teacher in the schools of New Brunswick around the fifties. One only has to read the history of Francophone or Anglophone minorities in Canada to understand that the history of survival or assimilation is directly linked to the access to schools in one's mother tongue. It is the access to education in one's language and the humble school teachers, who were often nuns, that are responsible for the fire of developing minorities or the embers that still hold hope in spite of everything. Even before the belated expansion of Radio-Canada, even before the grants from the Secretary of State, the French-speaking people of Acadia, Ontario and western Canada showed through their collections and their cents that they wanted to remain themselves. Can you measure the hope this constitutional amendment brings them?

● (2110)

*[English]*

Mr. Speaker, I would like to deal with the constitutional proposal, which is very important to those who have shown over the last century not only their loyalty to Canada but also their continuing will to live as full citizens—the French-speaking Canadians outside the province of Quebec. The proposed language of education right would enable citizens of Canada whose first language is either French or English, but who are a minority in a given province, to have their children educated in that minority official language, when numbers warrant.

At this point I would like to address this issue not from a legal point of view, for I am not a lawyer, but, rather, perhaps from the standpoint of a bit of common sense and some practical experience. It is possible to give justice and fairness in the area of education without creating division nor causing financial ruin, and here I call to witness my own province of New Brunswick, a region not rich in money and goods but a region whose history should justify suspicion, mistrust and perhaps hostility. Yet New Brunswick is often given as a model to the rest of the country. This was not always the case.

I would like to share with you what I experienced as a New Brunswick teacher during the early fifties in the rural parish of Drummond, which, incidentally, was totally French speaking. I had to prepare totally French-speaking high school students for the provincial matriculation examination in history from an English textbook. The lecture was in French, and then we rehearsed the answers that they would give when they wrote the matriculation tests in English, the same test, by the way, which was passed by the students of the cities of Fredericton and Saint John. As hon. members can well imagine, this created some slight handicap, since matriculation for all New Brunswickers was required for entrance to university, to nursing schools, to normal school and to trade schools. I feel no rancour, and I do not assess blame when I say this. I give this example because I believe that from a difficult past New Brunswick has emerged in the last 20 or 30 years as a leader in the accommodation of different language groups.

After the war, men of vision opened rural high schools to all New Brunswick children, and men of vision with names like Chapman, Blakeney, Taylor, Hugh John Flemming, Louis Robichaud and, yes, Richard Hatfield came to the conclusion that access to education had to be access to one's own culture and, in fact, probably to one's own soul.

How did these changes come about? I believe they came about because there was a coalition of human forces anxious to alleviate human conditions which spoke no language. The first steps were taken by a Liberal government under John McNair, then under a government by Hugh John Flemming, as I said, who was a member of this House, and then through successive governments including the one of Louis Robichaud, an Acadian who was three times elected by a province which has a good majority of English-speaking people. The changes have continued under the leadership of a Conservative premier, Richard Hatfield, and I believe we understood why he spoke so eloquently about rights and about access to rights in the