

The Constitution

or in the Victoria modified formula, or in the present package which the government has put before us. As a person coming from a province with a population of about one million people, I recognize the fact that population should be taken as a factor when there is an amendment. There is no argument with that, and that population factor is considered as the resolution passes through the House. It is also recognized to some degree in the other place where, while representation is on the basis of regions, we also recognize the population reality there. But once they have a resolution through both Houses of Parliament and have recognized the population reality, surely they cannot once again classify provinces on the basis of population, making some more equal than others, dealing one in and dealing one out, because then they will not have a mosaic, a country, a federation. It is not a unitary state yet, and we do not intend to let them make it one.

● (1640)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Epp: There is one other point. When the first ministers met, there were certain areas they thought should be changed. I do not have the time today to go into the areas of opting in and opting out, but they were restricted. I will just give one for the benefit of the Canadian public. One opting-out section was that if a boundary of a province was to be changed or if its resources were affected, that province could opt out. I think that is only natural and normal. It is becoming clear today that under section 42 the resources of the provinces, no matter what guarantees are in the letter dated October 21 from the Prime Minister to the Leader of the New Democratic Party can be taken away; they can be taken away under section 42.

Mr. Chrétien: They cannot.

Mr. Clark: Of course they can, absolutely.

Mr. Epp: They can be taken away. Throughout this debate we have been saying that on section 42, and we have asked the Prime Minister if he will only use section 42 as a one-time only deadlock breaking device. He never gives us that assurance. He wants that cudgel, he wants that power.

Mr. Clark: To create the deadlock and then use a referendum.

Mr. Chrétien: That is not true.

Mr. Epp: Perhaps I should give the gentleman opposite a simple lesson in political science. The premiers and the members of their ten legislatures have been elected by the people as well. They have some legitimacy, even though the government might not want to recognize that.

Mr. Chrétien: We have some too.

Mr. Epp: That point should be kept in mind. One additional matter which I did not think after ten days of debate would have to be mentioned is the matter of patriation. But I must mention it to both my Liberal colleagues and members of the

media. I believe I am a person of some patience, but even as late as last night the press mentioned that suddenly we are in favour of patriation because of the resolution before us. My leader said in the opening speech of this debate that we want patriation, we want it now, and we want our amendments here in Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Epp: It was in the communique. No matter what the arguments of the Liberals might be in terms of the proposals we put forward, they should not any longer leave, either directly or inferentially, the big myth that we are opposed to patriation. That is the fact. They should stay with the truth, and they know that is the truth. But they like always to shade it. If it helps their argument, they shade it a bit. They should not shade it again.

It makes eminently good sense that the constitution be brought back. The argument put forward by the Minister of Justice that we would not have a constitution, that we would be naked—I would take it seriously if I knew he had. But he himself did not take it seriously. Amendments should be made in Canada. We want a made-in-Canada constitution. I believe that is our responsibility. Let us patriate it. The formula works if we want to make it work and do it at home.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D. M. Collette (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I am quite happy to participate in the debate this afternoon. I want to deal with the procedural aspect of the motion before us, because I think a case could be made that this very supply motion is not in order.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Collette: Rather than challenge the propriety of this motion and be accused of denying the opposition its right to speak, we have not done that. But if Mr. Speaker consults the precedents, the Standing Orders, and citation 481 of Beauchesne's, for example, he will see that we should not be discussing this matter because the substance of the matter is still before us in motion No. 18. Citation 481 indicates quite clearly that the similarity of the subject matter of an opposition motion cannot prejudice in any way the progress of a bill under discussion which deals with approximately the same matter.

Some hon. Members: What bill?

Mr. Collette: If the precedents were looked up, I suggest that would also extend to the motion before the House. I just wanted to raise that in passing, because we are being magnanimous.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Collette: We are being generous.