

*Government Orders*

Therefore I ask myself the question I think members of the Bloc Québécois should be asking themselves. Should that happen, and the province of Quebec feels comfortable about being in Canada, what should the legislation be that the members of the province of Quebec will be dealing with here that would govern future constitutional amendment procedures? Because that is what I think this is about.

It took us 125 or 127 years to get to what is an historic piece of legislation. It is the kind of legislation that, as the hon. members will know, five or ten years ago I would have said I would not support for all of the old and traditional reasons of "I am a Tory". My colleague from Montreal, the dean of the House, knows full well what that means. I am not just a Conservative, I am a Tory. I have old fashioned views about representative democracy, the rights of this legislature and the importance of this place. Both the Meech process and my hon. friend for Etobicoke—Lakeshore have convinced me that if we are going to make people believe that the Constitution of this country is their own, they are going to have some part in the process of adopting it.

They have to feel it is theirs and they have to feel ownership in it. The other way to say it is that those things you can change by changing the government may not need to be put to referendum. For those things that you cannot change by simply electing a different group of people to government perhaps you need a different vehicle to decide. What lay behind those who have been promoting this kind of legislation for many years, and I salute my friend, is not that this is about the admitted difficulties we face in trying to find a resolution to an existing constitutional dilemma. It may or may not be a useful tool. One does not know entirely. In my own heart I do not know the answer.

The member for Outremont will know that there are dilemmas for many of us as to whether the use of such a tool is a useful thing in the circumstances. One has to answer that question separately from whether Parliament should have this tool. After all these years in every town hall, every public meeting that I have attended on constitution making, the people have to have some sense that it now belongs to them. In the end, all of the consultation we do will be blessed if we have faith in their capacity to say that it is theirs. I think that is what this was meant to be.

Within that context, if I may put it in the amendments from another old friend, the hon. member for Jonquière—some members opposite are attempting to play the divide and conquer game—I accept that. It is sometimes done by members opposite. We never did it when we were in opposition.

I take entirely legitimately the intentions and the *bon esprit* of the hon. member for Jonquière that these are motions that he thinks would be useful in amending the bill. I struggle in a different context with the notion of whether one could limit expenses in election acts and what one does with that.

I am on record elsewhere as saying that if we could avoid limiting what people spend to express themselves in election procedures, I would be for it. The only reason we have ever been forced to it in that context is the notion that we have invented a concept of limiting the rights of candidates to spend and that therefore perhaps we have to limit the rights of others to spend in order to defend the candidate's right to get through a campaign properly. Even now properly the courts struck out our attempt to say people could not spend anything. We are now dealing with election expense amendments that are trying to find some way through the need to control what can be spent in elections and at the same time to defend the essential liberty of Canadians to do what they want and to express themselves.

My dilemma with these amendments is that I think they probably come too far in the context of giving people the right to own their Constitution. These particular amendments come too far toward the notion of saying when we give you liberty, which we do not really give you if one thinks about it, we just really let you find a way to express your own liberty through referenda.

Then we should somehow say how you choose to express yourself and how you choose to group yourself needs as much control or the form of control we found necessary to put into the Elections Act. I have difficulty with that because essentially I am a libertarian. I therefore have that difficulty. That is my problem with these amendments.

I rose only to say in the context of the book that was published today that we may be down into the morass of the details, and we do that at report stage, that is sometimes necessary, but that is not really what this is about. In the end I hope it is not about the premiers. I hope it is about, I think it is about, giving back to Canadians a sense of ownership of the rules of their beloved country.