

Railways

the municipalities will share those costs, but they will take on the construction of the fences in a very limited way.

On the minus side, the hon. member for Bow River (Mr. Taylor) is quite right, the cost will come out of property taxes. That is the hardest way to raise public revenues, but as private members we cannot suggest that the government pay for something done through a private member's bill. In order to get around that technicality the hon. parliamentary secretary recommended a cost-sharing program. Again, the hon. member for Bow River is quite right, this is a tough way to raise tax money. The mayor of my own municipality raised that question when I spoke to her.

By and large, the balance achieved in this bill is good. There is a chance for municipalities, the most observant and most sensitive level of government we have, to look at these problems and make applications. They will apply voluntarily; they will start the process and in so doing know that they will have to pay some of the cost. In turn, the railroads will be given some protection and some alleviation of a dangerous problem. The fencing in question will run along parks, near schools, near little bridges and so on. This does not call for miles and miles of fences running through our cities.

This is a good idea, Mr. Speaker. The bill achieves a nice balance in its treatment of the content and the process of government. I want to congratulate the parliamentary secretary.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Transport.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): The hon. parliamentary secretary will want to recall a long-standing tradition, that when a private member's bill is sent on to committee the mover of that bill traditionally offers the Chair a cigar. Shall I call it six o'clock?

An hon. Member: Six o'clock.

At 5.52 p.m. the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE CONSTITUTION

RESOLUTION RESPECTING CONSTITUTION ACT, 1981

The House resumed debate on the motion of Mr. Chrétien, seconded by Mr. Roberts, for an Address to Her Majesty the Queen respecting the Constitution of Canada.

And on the amendment of Mr. Epp, seconded by Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton)—That the motion be amended in Schedule B of the proposed resolution by necessary changes to the Schedule consequential thereto.

Mr. Mel Gass (Malpeque): Mr. Speaker, before I commence participating in the constitutional debate I would like to thank all the members of the committee who sat long, laborious hours. I would like especially to thank the hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Epp), who was the leader and carried the discussions for our party.

I am honoured to be participating in one of the most important debates in the history of the Canadian Parliament, as we consider a proposal by the federal government to bring home the British North America Act from the British parliament and to establish within this country our own Constitution.

As a Canadian from Prince Edward Island, I am especially proud of the part my province, the cradle of confederation, has played in creating this great country of ours. While we were not one of the original colonies which first joined confederation in 1867, Islanders are indeed proud that we hosted the first conference in 1864. The reluctance of the Island to joint the union of colonies 114 years ago is, I think, an historic indicator of why the provinces today are reluctant to accept the terms of the constitutional proposals the federal government has placed before us.

I believe there are parallels which can be drawn between Prince Edward Island's and the other provinces' request for agreeable terms upon which they could enter confederation and today's constitutional ventures. In 1864 the people of Prince Edward Island were stubbornly opposed to giving up their rights by becoming a province of Canada. They were adverse to any union which would surrender to anybody outside Charlottetown, their capital, control over the domestic concerns of the Island. Prince Edward Island did not want to part with any vestige of its local power.

Islanders at that time were busy, self-sufficient, safe and content on their little island. At both the Charlottetown and Quebec meetings in 1864 Islanders, despite their aversion to union, listened intently and agreed that the federation of all the colonies was desirable, provided the terms of the union could be satisfactory. But debate was not tempting enough. The terms of union did not prove acceptable to Prince Edward Island. Islanders felt that the terms were unfair to the island, especially those regarding their financial arrangements. They wanted the buying out of the absentee landlords of Prince