

National Centennial Act

vote and a majority of delegates voted to have the word "dominion" suppressed.

Mr. Chairman, if we are anxious to celebrate the centenary of confederation, we must at the same time try to do something to improve the present situation and remove the stress which is now prevailing in this country.

It is all very well to erect monuments and to work out great plans, but it would also be necessary, in my opinion, to have a much higher ideal. Besides, it was very well understood that in 1967, all the governments, both federal and provincial, would remain supreme and that they would be in a position to raise the necessary funds to exercise their respective rights.

I believe that the fathers of confederation made serious mistakes. First, granting the federal government the right to veto any provincial law; second, leaving the federal government vague and almost unlimited powers of taxation; third, the authority to grant subsidies to the provinces; fourth, restricting the use of the French language to the province of Quebec, the federal parliament and the federal courts of justice.

We know that the fathers of confederation got together to work out a constitution to be submitted for the approval of the government in London. Incidentally, the British North America Act was drafted in English only. It is a legal document passed in England. Of course, it has been translated into French but it is not like a bill which is drafted in both languages here in Ottawa.

When I referred to mistakes, here is what I really meant. My intention is not to blame the fathers of confederation too much; the problems as well as the means of communication were different then. It was very difficult for the fathers of confederation to see one hundred years ahead.

That is why, Mr. Chairman, I sincerely hope that the government will add another program to the centennial objectives. An ideal objective would be, in my opinion, to revise the Canadian constitution completely, in co-operation with the provinces.

The Canadian constitution has existed since 1867. The federal government could avail itself of the forthcoming federal-provincial conference to make this suggestion to the provinces in anticipation of the centenary. The Canadian constitution might be revised in co-operation with the provinces by being adjusted to modern times.

I know that this ideal objective can meet with difficulties, but if we really want to celebrate the centenary of confederation in a spirit of unity, we must work towards that end. And, I already said, provincial co-operation is essential.

[Mr. Pigeon.]

It is all very well, to set up royal commissions on biculturalism but, in my opinion, this is not the best means to give national unity a concrete form. Besides, the value of that royal commission was questioned by the conseil de vie française because culture and education belong to the provinces.

I think we should find a system to completely revise the Canadian constitution in order to bring it into line with our modern world. Also, the provinces should be given back their taxation powers, definite powers in the provincial as well as in the federal field. The knowledge of the French language should be extended, not only in the province of Quebec, at the federal level, in the courts, but on a national scale in co-operation with the provinces. Surely, there must be a way to do something in that direction.

Those are the few suggestions I wanted to make and I spoke in accordance with my conscience—

An hon. Member: Now he has two consciences.

Mr. Pigeon: Mr. Chairman, those are precisely the people who stamped out the rights to the provinces. Those are the very people.

For instance, when you see the President of the Privy Council say, as he did in a televised press conference last Sunday—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Pigeon: He stated: "We will abolish some joint programs but we will set up some others." That means that the policy of the government is contradictory and by the way, the President of the Privy Council is a good example, because he wrote a book and since that time, he contradicts himself quite often.

Mr. Lamontagne: But you never read it.

Mr. Pigeon: If the President of the Privy Council wants to succeed, I wish him—

Mr. Berger: Mr. Chairman, I rise on a point of order, and I do so on the basis of these last words uttered by the hon. member for Joliette-L'Assomption-Montcalm who speaks about contradiction when he himself leads us into confusion.

He speaks about the erection of monuments and afterwards—

Mr. Pigeon: Mr. Chairman, the point of order is not well taken and I rise on a question of privilege.

Mr. Berger: I would like to know—

Mr. Pigeon: I rise on a question of privilege.