

The Constitution

the breaking of our federation. I suggest that would be the aftermath of the course he wants to follow. We see a somewhat different aftermath. We see an aftermath of mature federal-provincial negotiations of an evolving constitution without trade-off blackmail. We see an aftermath of an amending formula that makes clear the protection of provincial rights, an aftermath in which the principles of equalization, of language rights and Indian rights are enshrined for all time.

He talks of aftermaths and we provide a solution to a deadlock of 50 years. Surely that is the challenge of government. We provide the protections our people have cried for in a charter of rights, the protections that delegation after delegation pleaded for as they appeared before the constitutional committee. We offer an aftermath of stability, for good fences make good neighbours, as Robert Frost said. Good provisions make good relations. While all the world is moving toward larger units, the Leader of the Opposition would give the Canadian government less authority than the Common Market has over the sovereign states of Europe. Years and years after the late Marshall McLuhan outlined the global village, the Leader of the Opposition wants a country where nothing happens except by unanimity—which means that nothing happens.

Yes, our vision of Canada and of its greatness is different. Our vision of Canada is more, much more, than the sum of its parts. I am confident that our vision will prevail.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1610)

Hon. George Hees (Northumberland): Madam Speaker, I should like to express my views, very briefly, on the government's proposal to amend the Constitution of Canada. As we know, the debate has been divided into three main parts: first, bringing the Constitution to Canada; second, working out a new amending formula; and third, the inclusion of a charter of rights.

It has been clear from the start of the debate that the overwhelming majority of Canadians want the Constitution brought to Canada, so that has never been an issue. The issue is the plan of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) to ask the British government to amend our Constitution for us by changing the amending formula and entrenching a charter of rights. Under his plan, the Prime Minister intends that this country should go cap in hand to the British government and say, "We are not capable of amending our own Constitution, so will you please do the job for us?" That is colonialism of the highest order, and should not be done by a proud and independent nation.

What should be done is this. First, bring the Constitution to Canada as soon as possible, without asking the British government to amend it for us; second, decide in Parliament, with a free vote, which amending formula meets this country's needs in the most practical and effective manner; third, decide in Parliament, with a free vote, which measures should be includ-

ed in a charter of rights; and fourth, amend our own Constitution.

A free vote on each issue will make it possible for every Member of Parliament freely to express the views of that part of the country which he or she represents, and back up those opinions with their vote. This will be a true expression of the will of the Canadian people, and is the only way that an independent, self-respecting country can do the job which confronts us.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Eva Côté (Rimouski-Témiscouata): Mr. Speaker, the privilege of rising in this House during such an important debate in the history of our country is a great honour as well as a great responsibility. For the second time in a year, I must ponder on my country and find an answer as much for myself as for my family, my children and all the citizens of Rimouski-Témiscouata who have asked me to represent them here. I do not intend to reflect here the views of each of my constituents, but I think that most of them share my feeling about the nature of Canada and what it should be for our children, namely a free country, a structured, democratic and independent state.

For almost 300 years, Mr. Speaker, we have been working together to build a country. Last May when the referendum was held, like all Canadians residing in Quebec, I heard many of my fellow citizens say again and again that Canada is the country extending from ocean to ocean that we inherited from our forefathers a few decades or centuries ago and of which we must take good care. Throughout that vast territory, one finds a land, a subsoil, rivers and coasts that are rich, fertile and full of resources which have enabled every Canadian from the very beginning to earn a living and to be fulfilled.

Canada is also a hospitable, welcoming, attractive and hearty land that thousands of my fellow citizens have chosen over the years for all kinds of reasons as their new country, and all together, taking one year with another, with sheer love, will, perseverance and tolerance, we have built one of the finest countries in the world, and in so doing, we have developed our national pride. We have adopted symbols which reflect today our patriotism and our feeling of a shared future, thus uniting all Canadians: the Canadian citizenship, the one-leaved flag and the national anthem are surely the three main symbols.

Moreover, in 1968, more specifically on October 17, the Liberal government of the time introduced legislation dealing with the official languages of Canada which finally received royal assent on July 9, 1970. The policy on bilingualism had to be reaffirmed in 1973 through a resolution of the House, and I should like to say a few words about the Official Languages Act. The purpose of this act has never been to compel all Canadians from coast to coast to be bilingual, that is to say, to speak both French and English. Its purpose was instead to