

*The Constitution*

feel an agreed-to charter of rights should ensure Canadians the right to the enjoyment of property, as this too has been of great importance in the building of our country.

The Vancouver amending formula accepts the equality of all provinces and has the necessary characteristics of flexibility and a reasonable national consensus before any amendments are approved. It better reflects the reality of the federal nature of Canada, composed of different yet equal partners, and provides a safeguard from undue centralization.

I feel this refusal to accept God and reference to property rights is just another dilatory tactic for the government to amend and introduce these concepts, to manipulate the people into a false sense of passion for patriotism so that other important and far-reaching changes will be accepted without question about the long-term loss of individual rights. It would not surprise me in the least if the government introduced these measures affecting God and property rights at a convenient time to try and divert attention from other controversial aspects of its package.

The Constitution should be the result of broad consensus if it is to be respected across the country. We cannot run the risk of spawning secretive or semi-secretive organizations and movements as a result of unfair, arbitrary and unilateral constitutional proposals. Some countries send arbitrary dictates out from the centre of government to try and control the people, and we hear of the unfortunate results of such arbitrary action.

We in Canada are fortunate to have freedom of religion and worship and freedom of assembly in order to practise our different religions. The Fathers of Confederation founded Canada recognizing the supremacy of God, the importance of the family and private property, and the respect for moral and spiritual values. Just like property rights, people have fought and died over religious beliefs for centuries because of the strong feeling they instil. The Diefenbaker Bill of Rights recognized the importance of this quality of Canadian life in its wording.

My riding of Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington is one of the oldest settled areas in Ontario. In 1784 much of the area was settled by United Empire Loyalists who left the United States because they chose to face hardships and the unknown to retain their way of life. These people through conviction, faith and hard work settled the area and worked to build what became the nation of Canada. Because of their faith, through their hard work, and through the work and faith of other groups across Canada the social fabric of our nation was created. It is because of the strong beliefs and hard work of our forefathers that we have such a great country today. We are not an atheist state, as some communist countries profess to be. Canada was built on high principles, strong heritage and religious beliefs.

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You cannot do a good job on such an important document respecting the concept of Canada when what you are trying to do is change the concept of Canada in a unilateral fashion.

The government should slow down and listen to reason, because reason is the future of a strong Canada based on a workable system through the broadest possible consensus. There is no reason for personal ambitions or arbitrary deadlines in an issue as important as the Constitution of our country.

Canada is composed of ten provinces and two territories. The federal government should not forget this fact. We have one of the largest countries in the world. Due to geographic expanse, by definition, many of the component parts of Canada differ greatly with respect to climate, topography, resource allocation and living standards. People in different parts of Canada have very real and different problems to face as a result of their location and heritage. This is an asset for any country. It adds strength and colour to the Canadian mosaic.

Powers and responsibility in the BNA Act are given to the federal government and others are given to the provinces. Powers of a more local nature were generally granted to the provinces in order to have a government in touch with and in understanding of the various unique provincial concerns in different areas across this vast country. On the other hand, the federal government was given powers over matters of a larger and more national concern. This system has served us rather well over the years as the various powers set out in the BNA Act were interpreted and utilized.

The basic premise of Canada is that it is a federation of provinces, each with its own sovereign government, united together in a federal state with a sovereign federal government. The provinces and the federal government are partners in confederation. They entered confederation with an agreement to define their roles in this country. They are partners in Canada. They are all integral and important components in confederation. No one part is a background of fluctuating importance, but every province, along with the federal government, is an active partner with something to contribute. It is important to realize that it was the regions of this British North America that created Canada and not the federal state that created the provinces. This is important to a strong partnership, something which the federal government does not seem to understand.

Federal-provincial relations have suffered greatly under the present government. It seems the federal government goes out of its way with unpopular legislation to trample the interests of the provinces. This is no way to treat a partner, and certainly not a proper atmosphere to create in the midst of the government's push for constitutional change. This is a federal state, not a unitary one. If the federal government continues to try to write the provinces out of confederation we could be heading for a unitary state; that is not the Canadian way. The provinces realize this and they are standing up for their rights, their future, and because they are good Canadians, for Canada's future.

We in the Progressive Conservative Party are in favour of patriation of the BNA Act to Canada. Patriation could be done quickly to get our document of nationhood where it