

National Centennial Act

I have just one other word to add about the turmoil there is around the use of the word "national". I do not think it hurts us to be reminded that there are those among us who think of Canada as having originally been founded by two nations; that we should take all that into consideration in our attempt today to recast confederation, conserving what we have, and going on to build a better Canada. This matter which is being drawn to our attention, makes us realize that what we have to face is the desire of those in the French speaking part of Canada for a greater measure of autonomy as a French speaking nation and a French speaking group, but not as a province.

Where I think we are in danger of going awry in today's situation is when people like Premier Bennett, and some others, translate this difficulty we are trying to sort out into a case of provincial rights. It is not a reversion to provincial rights that is wanted. We have rather two main groups to consider. We have the French speaking people for whom a greater measure of autonomy seems to be that which they most desire; and we have the English speaking people in the rest of Canada, to whom the benefits of federalism are just as precious as are the benefits of autonomy to the French speaking people. This, I suggest, does not mean that we want to turn our land into a squabble over provincial rights. We have to think of what the two main groups want. I think we can recast and rewrite our constitution so that those of us who so desire can have the benefits of federalism and those who wish can have the benefits of autonomy, up to a point at any rate, within the Canadian family.

I do not think we should be alarmed because the word "national" is brought out into the open in a debate like this. As an English speaking Canadian I like the word. It is a good word. I like this nation to which I belong. But I like the word "Canada" even better. The word "nation" might apply to any one of a hundred nations; but "Canada" is the area, the country, the heritage to which we all belong. Canada is the country we are trying to build for the future, and I think we can build a better Canada if we try to grapple sympathetically with the problem before us, as posed by this particular piece of legislation. I think we can help make for a better future, for a better second century, if we try now to make up for the mistakes we have made in the last few years, and make the celebration of our 100th anniversary what it should be. I have said, and I repeat, that I think precious time, maybe too much time, is being lost. When suggestions were made over the past decade they

[Mr. Knowles.]

were ignored. However, there are still three and a half to four years to go, and I think hon. members will realize that some things can still be done. I urge that this stocktaking session we are having be taken seriously, and that we do our best to plan for the kind of centennial which will be worthy of this great Canada to which we all belong.

[Translation]

Mr. Frenette: May I point out, Mr. Chairman, that it is five o'clock?

Mr. Gregoire: One minute before five o'clock.

[Text]

The Deputy Chairman: It being five o'clock, so that the house may proceed to the consideration of private members' business pursuant to section 3 of standing order 15, it is now my duty to leave the chair.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Batten): It being five o'clock p.m. the house will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper, namely private bills.

PRIVATE BILLS

POINTE-AUX-TREMBLES BRIDGE

The house resumed from Thursday, November 14, consideration of the motion of Mr. Rouleau for the second reading of Bill S-41, to authorize the construction of a bridge and a causeway over the St. Lawrence river near the city of Pointe-aux-Trembles.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Batten): Is the house ready for the question?

[Translation]

Mr. L. J. Pigeon (Joliette-L'Assomption-Montcalm): No, Mr. Speaker, I should like to say a few words.

I put a few questions to the hon. member for Dollard (Mr. Rouleau) and I would be very happy if he could answer them. I shall reply later, if the Speaker gives me his consent.

Mr. Guy Rouleau (Dollard): Mr. Speaker, if my memory is good—

[Text]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Batten): Order. I should point out that if the hon. member for Dollard (Mr. Rouleau) speaks now he will close the debate.

[Translation]

Mr. Pigeon: Mr. Speaker, as I said last week, I think this bill is against the public interest and that it is the responsibility of the members of this house to take the necessary steps to kill it.