

The Constitution

want to make the effort, and there are some now who do, can communicate with the French-speaking members of this House. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) has done it as well as others, and they still do. During the 1980 referendum, I had the pleasure of hearing in the same forum the hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie) and the hon. member for Burin-St. George's (Mr. Simmons) speak not of Newfoundland, not of Quebec, but of Canada.

Is it known, Mr. Speaker, that these two hon. members from Newfoundland are now learning French? I congratulate both of them. The assurance that Canadians may use either French or English anywhere in Canada, *A mari usque ad mare*, as I was saying a while ago, is one of the responses to this threat.

In the past few years, Mr. Speaker, several young Quebecers have gone west because of the economic instability and political uncertainty in their province. And I should like to quote a headline in last Saturday's issue of *La Presse*:

The exodus westward kept up in '80:
30,572 QUEBECERS HAVE LEFT

This is not a fabrication, Mr. Speaker, it is a reality. I hope that this exodus will end and that the results of April 13 will not intensify it. Thanks to this charter which will include the right to get an education in French, these young Quebecers will be able to return to their home towns with children who can speak the language of their grandparents.

In the past hundred years, many Quebecers have left their province to go to the United States because they hoped to find work and a future there. Some 1,600,000 Franco-Americans are now living there and they do not all speak French. One of the best examples I can give you is that of Tom Cousineau, an "All-American" who is one of the best players on the Montreal Alouettes football team and who cannot speak a word of French.

Mr. Speaker, in the past few years the Canadian economy has shifted to the West as in 1880 the economy was in northeastern America. I would like our young people to have the opportunity and the privilege to educate their children in the language of their choice. Am I asking too much, Mr. Speaker?

I think that as the result of that important reform, Canada will be a country much more effective and better governed, a country where governments at every level will be more receptive and more sensitive to the needs of the people. I think that the rights of every Canadian should be protected under a charter incorporating individual, political and democratic rights. Even with our traditions, Canadians make a serious mistake when they take those rights for granted. Such a charter will protect us all individually and collectively from a government anxious to impede or deny civil freedoms. Equality before the law, protection against illegal arrest, freedom of expression, of speech, of peaceful assembly, of thought and religion are at the basis of a free society and the way to

provide those freedoms to society is to incorporate them in a constitution which cannot be altered nor left at the mercy of a parliament or a legislature.

I feel that the right of all Canadians to move about freely from one province to another to find work must be guaranteed. Fundamental rights, Mr. Speaker, cannot be bartered for specific and varying claims from the provinces. If we wait for unanimous agreement, we shall run into a wall, a deadlock; that is what will happen, and the past proves it. Unanimity might be reached tomorrow, or the day after, or perhaps never.

If we accept the April 16 proposal of the eight provincial premiers, the country will be made up of ten provinces and, as the leader of the opposition once said, it will be a community of communities. Each province will have different rights: we will be Ontarians, Albertans, Newfoundlanders, Quebecers living in a country north of the United States and called Canada. Is that what we want or do we want a country made up of ten provinces, whose citizens are equal, who have the same rights and privileges from the Atlantic to the Pacific, *A mari usque ad mare*, Mr. Speaker? If we go ahead with the proposed resolution now before us with amendments, there will be ample opportunity in the near future to work in a Canadian context with a view to finding an equitable solution to the other constitutional problems.

Mr. Speaker, I want to close by repeating the words of the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Social Development, and I quote:

Canada is a beautiful land, but we have the opportunity of making it even more fertile, and of leaving to our children and the children of our children a country in which the diversity and the equality that must exist in our society are recognized.

To my mind, the constitutional debate of 1981 is a historical time which, once the quarrels, the discord and the insults have been forgotten, will be of benefit to all Canadians. We will have a country that guarantees the weakest in our society equal rights and protections the like of which are to be found in very few democracies. Mr. Speaker, those words spoken by the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Social Development are now part of the history of this beautiful and great country, a country that will have grown through this historical debate.

● (2020)

[English]

Hon. Jake Epp (Provencher): Mr. Speaker, in rising today I intend to place before the House the various sections of the omnibus amendment introduced earlier today to the public by my leader. Before I do that, I think it important that we take stock of where we are in terms of the debate on the Constitution thus far.

What we have to do in the remaining three days of this debate before this matter is adjourned for a ruling by the Supreme Court is to remind ourselves as members of this House what in essence we are debating. We can get caught up