

No government, not even a freshly-elected majority government, can build a country, renew federalism, or change the constitution if it acts as though this proposal is just one among the many proposals it has rammed through over the years.

In this context I feel I must mention the difficulty that is involved in the constitutional debate because of the attitude of the government toward Canadian nationalism and Canadian unity over the years. There is a difficulty in talking about Canada which has come upon us because of the political strategies and attitudes of the Liberal party. I want to mention this difficulty because I feel it weakens our ability to do what we may indeed, be called upon by history to do at this particular point.

The other day I wore a maple leaf pin, one of a number which I had received when I went to a conference of the interparliamentary union. I had some left over, so I had put one on my lapel. In the course of one morning two people came up to me and asked me why I was wearing a Liberal pin, because I was wearing a maple leaf. Liberals may take some fleeting satisfaction in this coincidence of images, but the problem was indicated by my friend from Broadview-Greenwood the other day when he spoke about how he will never be able to see Canadian geese in the same light again, that he will always see them as Liberals in disguise.

That was a humorous way of bringing up a very serious matter, namely that the national symbols and language of Canada have been co-opted by the Liberal party. It is a very successful political strategy, but it means that when we have come to this particular historical moment, a time when we need to talk seriously and in depth about what it means to be a Canadian, every kind of symbol and language that is available has the stench of the Liberal party about it. That is part of the problem. The constitutional advertising is merely the latest example of this particular phenomenon.

For my part this afternoon, I will speak to these proposals from within the general framework of acceptance in principle outlined by the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Broadbent) which is, of course, qualified by our demand that an amendment on resource ownership and control be accepted in order to make this proposal the balanced and undivisive proposal that it must be if it is to be the kind of proposal that builds up, rather than tears down, our country. I will speak also from my own self-understanding as a second-generation Canadian whose father and grandfather served in the two world wars for the sake of a Canada which they believed was worthy of such service, a Canada which I am determined to maintain in such a worthy state and, indeed, increase it if I can do so.

Similarly, I will also speak out of my self-understanding as one who grew up in a part of Winnipeg, Manitoba where almost everyone had grandparents who came from another country. As children in elementary public school, we learned that our country was not one of two founding peoples or one of three, but a Canada of many peoples, of Ukrainian Canadians, Polish Canadians, German Canadians, Italian Canadians, Dutch Canadians, Scottish Canadians, Irish Canadians and so

### *The Constitution*

on, who over time, as we grew up, have come to call themselves just Canadians. This is a Canada which is different from the Canada of southern Ontario, the maritimes and even that of large metropolitan centres like Toronto where, indeed, there are many immigrant peoples, but who have had a different experience from the pioneer experience of immigrants in the west.

In any case, we in the New Democratic Party are favourably disposed to the government's proposals mainly because they reflect long-standing positions of the New Democratic Party itself. It is only natural for members of a political party to feel supportive in principle of ideas for which their party has always stood. Let me proceed item by item.

Our party has long been in favour of patriating the constitution. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) tells us that 20 years ago he introduced a private member's bill to this effect. As the party which, in my view, is the only truly nationalist party in this country, we could not oppose the patriation of our constitution, the bringing home of our constitution to Canadian soil.

We do regret that it has to be done unilaterally, but so be it. We are prepared to accept that this has become a constitutional as well as a symbolic necessity. Our deepest regret as New Democrats is that the Liberal government shows so little interest in giving Canadians control over their own lives both constitutionally and economically. We will not rest until this kind of comprehensive Canadian self-determination is a reality. One form of decolonization deserves another. However, there is one thing I do urge in this respect. I have noticed a tendency on the part of the government, and members of the Progressive Conservative Party have rightly pointed it out, to talk as though all we are doing is patriating the constitution. This may serve well as another Liberal strategy, but it is fundamentally dishonest. The proposal is much larger than that, and all of us should be entitled to debate it without having to listen to rhetoric about how the Liberals only want to bring the constitution home. Where I come from, many Canadians are not only sick and tired of this, they are infuriated at being self-righteously lectured on Canadianism by the Liberal party and its leader, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). We do not answer to him or to anyone else in the Liberal party for our identity as Canadians. We deeply resent what I cited earlier as the tragic co-opting of Canadian national symbols.

● (1750)

Our party has long been in favour of a charter of rights and freedoms, a position reiterated recently by the federal council of the New Democratic Party. This is our issue. Alone in this House we have a proud record of defending human rights and freedoms when others were willing to turn a blind eye for fear of disagreeing with a determined government or a fearful, aggressive majority, whether it was our criticism of the treatment of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War or our opposition to the paranoid detention of hundreds of innocent Canadians under the auspices of the War Measures Act