charter of economic rights. In order to assert such rights in the act, to be safe for the future they would have to be so general as really to be meaningless. If on the other hand an attempt was made to enumerate them with particularity I ask hon. members to realize that this would not be a safe course to follow because there is a great deal of difference in this respect between the field of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms on the one hand and that of economic rights and liberties on the other. The one are fundamental and changeless over the years; but one has only to realize the changing nature of the economy and the changing nature of the views with regard to economic rights to realize that that type of right is an entirely different matter.

I would ask hon. members to think how many practices which are now regarded as right and proper in the field of labour activities would have been prohibited absolutely had there been any attempt, say 100 years ago, to write a charter of economic rights and liberties. That is simply because the views of what was right and proper and what freedoms should be exercised and allowed in the field of economic activity 100 years ago were entirely different from the views of today. It therefore seems to me a very dangerous thing to suggest that we should attempt to write and define now for all time what are the limits of rights and freedoms in the economic field. However, it is quite a different proposition when we attempt to define and indicate the limits and the entitlement to rights and freedoms in this field of basic law and liberty.

Mr. Hellyer: Where is the hon. member's logic there?

Mr. Fulton: The next criticism that was made to which I should like to refer is that this is a "mere statute". It is said that our proposal is weak and feeble because it is a mere statute of the parliament of Canada and not imbedded in the constitution. It is suggested that somehow to imbed it in the constitution would place it further beyond the reach of the executive and even of succeeding parliaments than the present bill and would give it an aura of sanctity.

My first comment must be one of surprise that hon. members of parliament in the opposition, elected by the sovereign vote of a sovereign people, should so disregard and decry their own position, and thus belittle the trust and responsibility which their electors have reposed in them, as to portray a solemn enactment by the parliament of Canada as something of little consequence and no lasting effect. After all, this is what we were all elected for, to legislate. Our courts recognize that a statute of parliament represents the highest and most completely binding expression of the authority of the people. To denigrate and decry the effectiveness of legislation of this parliament, as is done by hon. members of the opposition, is to make an unfounded, ill-judged and misconceived attack upon the whole process of democratic legislation itself, which we are sworn to uphold.

As to such an attack being unfounded and ill-judged, the facts speak for themselves. But it is also misconceived in that it is based on an entirely false assumption as to the binding and solemn effects of a statute standing on its own as compared with a statute having the force of a constitutional amendment.

In the first place, the very charters cited with such fervour by hon. members opposite —the Magna Carta, the bill of rights, the petition of right and the habeas corpus act— all, with the exception of the Magna Carta, which was written before a recognizable parliament was assembled, were nothing more than "mere statutes" enacted by parliament, exactly comparable in that sense to the bill now before this house.

In the second place it seems hardly possible that those who make this attack could be so ignorant as to suppose that the Canadian constitution is found only in the British North America Act, which I would remind them is a British statute.

Mr. Pickersgill: Not entirely.

Mr. Fulton: Our constitution, like that of the United Kingdom, is composed of a large number of statutes passed by both the United Kingdom and Canadian parliaments, and an infinite number of conventions and parliamentary usages. This bill of rights would become part of our constitution just as the Senate and House of Commons Act, the Supreme Court Act of 1875, the Yukon Territories Act and Northwest Territories Act became part of our constitution just as soon as they were passed by parliament. Are my hon. friends opposite going to say that these statutes, the Supreme Court Act and the Senate and House of Commons Act, are of no effect because they are mere statutes enacted by the parliament of Canada? That is what they argue. These statutes are part of our constitution and are recognized as such. This bill of rights, although a statute of the parliametn of Canada and not an amendment to the British North America Act, will be of equal force and effect as part of the constitution of Canada.

In the third place this government has considered and rejected the suggestion that the bill of rights should take the form of an amendment to the British North America Act