After the troubled events of 1837, there was a suspension of the constitution and the creation of one parliament, and a clause was put in at that time providing that only the English language would be official in that parliament. But that lasted for only a very short time, and I feel—and I believe my fellow Canadians of my race and my religion can feel—that a better guarantee than anything that might be found in section 133 is to be found in that respect, for those who have been formed under the principles of British freedom and British fair play, to protect what are our essential rights.

It is not the manner of those who have themselves had, and whose ancestors have had, the formation that comes from that long history which has brought us to this point in the civilization of mankind, to do things which the conscience of humanity at large would regard as dishonourable; and the conscience of humanity at large would frown upon an assemblage in this house that attempted to take from me and from those of my race the right to speak the language I learned in my infancy as one of the official languages in which the deliberations of this house may be carried on. So it is of everything else that is not within section 92. If it is fair; if it is just; if it is proper according to the standards of human decency, it will be done, if it is unfair; if it is unjust; if it is improper, all members of this house will say, "It is not our manner to do such things."

Mr. DONALD M. FLEMING (Eglinton): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that at this stage of the debate it would not be proper to do more than touch on what one conceives to be the essential issue presented by the amendment before the house. I do not propose to review in detail the many matters that have been touched upon in this debate during which so much learning concerning Canadian constitutional history and Canadian constitutional law has been displayed. In passing, however, I offer the observation that I think many of the supporters of the government resolution, when their observations are reviewed with more detachment than has been evident in this debate thus far, will find that they have made some extreme statements which may prove embarrassing in times to come. Some of the supporters of the government resolution have made sweeping and general statements which I contend are not supportable in the light of constitutional practice and usage in this country.

It is unfortunate that the procedure in connection with a resolution of this kind, unlike that in connection with a bill, does not afford an opportunity to distinguish in debate between principle on the one hand and method and detail on the other. Therefore one must treat a question like this on balance. What is the essential principle involved in the resolution presented by the government and the principle of the amendment offered by the hon. member for Lake Centre (Mr. Diefenbaker) on behalf of the Progressive Conservative party? On the one hand, we have the government resolution offered as an attempt to eliminate an injustice which exists at the present time in the distribution of seats and which admittedly weighs most heavily on the province of Quebec because of the operation of subsection 4 of section 51 of the British North America Act. On the other hand, we see this principle involved: that to remedy that admitted injustice the government has resorted to a method which is fundamentally unsound and highly dangerous in its implications; that is to say, to proceed with a far-reaching amendment of the British North America Act without the slightest attempt at consultation with the provincial governments concerned.

In the beginning may I clarify one or two points to make quite clear my point of view in reference to the way in which subsection 4 of section 51 is operating at the present time. I say at once that it surprised me that many hon. members supporting the government resolution found it necessary to offer to the house laboured arguments to establish that the principle inherent in the British North America Act, with certain exceptions relating to the maritime provinces, was representation by population. Of course that is the principle. That is the foundation. When the fathers of confederation set about drafting the resolutions which eventually took legislative form in the British North America Act they were faced with two principles which had to be harmonized in some way or another. The first was the federal principle, the fact that certain states were going into confederation; and, second, that the citizens of those various states were to become common citizens of a new state or dominion. To harmonize those two principles they gave, through the Senate, certain recognition to the federal principle, by giving regional representation, a principle which is still to be found in the representation in the Senate to-day; while in the distribution of seats in the House of Commons they gave full effect to the principle of representation by population, with a qualification in the case of the maritime provinces which took fuller effect in the amendment to section 51 in 1915.