

The Constitution

[Translation]

Mr. Raymond Savard (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to be participating today in the debate on the constitution. A number of members have already spoken in the House and have expressed their desire to see their freedoms protected in our constitution. Today all of us can cherish the dream of giving the choice to the people of this beautiful and rapidly growing country and of opening the way to the realization of their hopes.

At the time of the Quebec referendum, the Prime Minister told all Canadians that when the referendum was over, we were going to patriate the constitution. Today, Mr. Speaker, our Prime Minister wants to carry out his promise, and we are being called traitors, sheep and all sorts of other names. I would like to say that I am proud to be a Canadian and to serve a Prime Minister who stands upright and who wants to build a future for the entire nation, to give it freedom of conscience and of religion, freedom of thought, freedom of the press and of information, freedom to live at liberty in a Canada where every citizen may move about without hindrance. We should not forget the billions of people who would give anything to have the freedom we enjoy in Canada.

I cannot understand the negative attitude of my friends on the other side, who are inventing all sorts of excuses and who seem to want to destroy this beautiful country. It is for this reason that I am making my contribution today. As a Canadian and as a spokesman for my fellow citizens, I wish to express to the House their feelings and their desire to see their individual rights and their language rights guaranteed everywhere in Canada, along with their basic and democratic right to have their children educated in their mother tongue. It is the duty of all hon. members to place the rights of Canadians before those of the state. And it is for these reasons that I appeal to all Canadians to help us to entrench all these rights in the new Canadian constitution.

Mr. La Salle: You will have to convince Mr. Ryan!

Mr. Savard: Mr. Speaker, I would like to mention an example which some of us experienced during the Quinquennale de la francophonie in Winnipeg. I had an experience during my visit to that area. I saw people who were very proud of speaking French but who, unfortunately, for fear of losing their jobs, were obliged to speak English. The same thing happens in the universities. Students attend courses in French, but as soon as they leave the university they go back to speaking English.

I was looking at a television program recently on the twentieth anniversary of French television in Winnipeg, in which we were shown how French teaching in the school would cease the minute the inspector came into the classroom. As far as I am concerned, I find this situation deplorable and unacceptable. Francophones ask neither favour nor privilege, but

merely the right to be treated as full partners and not as second-class citizens. They have the right to live and to develop in all the provinces of Canada.

I should like also, Mr. Speaker, to mention the magnificent work of our Minister of Justice (Mr. Chrétien) and his performance during his meeting with the ministers. In my view, he is quite right in saying that we must follow the work of Mr. Diefenbaker and Mr. Thomas, for it is worthy of mention. But when I hear the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark), I am afraid, and I am sure those two great men are turning in their graves.

Let us consider the right to economic mobility for our citizens across the country. What will happen to the right to life and liberty if we cannot move to or settle, work or invest in the province of our choice? Without this freedom, will our system become like those of totalitarian countries? As we know, the citizens of communist countries do not enjoy these rights; they don't even exist. In Russia, travel from one state to another requires a permit from the central government. Personally, I say that Canadians, in our country, have no intention of adopting this way of life, and on their behalf, I insist that this freedom, the right to mobility, be retained, because Canada is a free country from sea to sea.

With regard to economic union, Mr. Speaker, such union is important to the well-being of all Canadians, in addition to providing our vast and varied country with one of the highest standards of living in the world. The different regions and economic sectors must complement one another in order to conserve their resources, for without their mutual co-operation, Canada will become a country dependent upon other industrialized countries. Although the constitution in its 113 years has not kept pace with developments in society, I find it quite normal that the provinces should claim certain powers; if each one took only its share of the pie, it would be ideal. It is also normal that our government should retain those powers that affect the national interest and that concern the country as a whole. The new constitution should encompass this concept, while adapting to the evolution of the society to come. This action on the part of the government is justified, because there is no alternative. We have made a commitment to the people of Quebec, and we must now carry it out. We must have an amending formula binding the central government and all the provinces of Canada.

[English]

The Anglophones in my province have always had the opportunities and right to live and work in their language. They should have those rights guaranteed in our constitution, and their example should be made to all the other provinces. The rights and dignities of Francophones across this country should be held as dear as those of Anglophones in Quebec.