

The Constitution

ment in this nation, I would appoint a minister for full-time duty on this alone for two years.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Yurko: The least that can be done by the province is to evolve some meaningful amendments or alterations to the Victoria formulae. The Victoria formula is a regional formula with four regional "veto" powers. It must be revised to give it a selected narrow provincial "veto" component and a national "veto" component. The provincial veto component must be the protection of provincial resource ownership and boundary integrity in accordance with an amendment I proposed, which was as follows:

No constitutional amendment affecting changes to the resource ownership rights of any province or provinces, or changes to the physical boundaries of any province or provinces shall become law unless such changes have been approved by the legislative assemblies of the province or provinces specifically affected.

The smaller provinces simply cannot be held to ransom in this regard by powerful regional partners. They must have some protection in the most narrow of areas, which is the protection of their very areas and the resources they own.

The national veto component should be that any combination of provinces having 25 per cent of the population of Canada shall have a veto on a constitutional amendment. Not only those that had reached 25 per cent of the population of Canada but any combination of provinces having 25 per cent of the population should have a veto.

Stated positively, any constitutional amendment must have the approval of provinces whose population is equal to or greater than 75 per cent of the total Canadian population. This, is perhaps the appropriate way to overcome the Victoria formula limitations on a rapidly growing west. Otherwise, the west could have over 50 per cent of the population of Canada in a couple of decades and still have only one veto.

I expect that amendments similar to these will be the bargaining position of the federal government and the provinces during the two-year period after patriation. Such changes add to the possible veto of the eight smaller provinces but do not take anything away from Ontario and Quebec regional veto powers in the Victoria formula.

Let me say in conclusion that once we were a community of communities, a nation in which each individual community was almost a self-contained entity. I remember this well because the culture and language of a community of people was not really threatened except by the autocratic dictates of the provincial school board. I remember well when Foster Hewitt and his Saturday night broadcast penetrated our communities. This was followed by an explosion of technological encroachment: transportation, television, electricity, gas, and so forth. The communities soon lost their identities to integration, interdependence and homogenization. In less than 50 years, Canada moved from a community of communities to a highly integrated, highly interdependent, regional structure. Some provinces were natural regions and therefore undertook regional responsibilities. Other provinces were too small and too sparsely populated to become regions unto themselves, and

so they had to be interlinked with other provinces for rational growth and identification and progress. In fact, in some cases, the very essence of provincial status became questionable. In other cases, the very physical size of provinces suggested new regional identification.

The very nature of the political freedom we enjoy as a result of confederation prevented needed integration of some provincial entities. In the growing west, historical grouping of provinces prevented some realignment of regions. The accelerated pace of growth and settlement of the west and north will cause future regional re-definition.

Canada has become literally five regions within which provincial entities increasingly inhibit growth and evolution rather than enhancing it. But the future of Canadian nationalism will not be restricted for too long by this inhibiting process. Rationalization will be forced by technological integration. Constitutional accord or discord based upon regional well-being and regional aspirations is inevitable and therefore forms the very basis of the amending formula being proposed as the federal option, though it needs improvement.

This nation, Canada, will increasingly evolve, and its interdependence will increasingly grow as a co-operative quasi-economic and social federation of five natural regions. Within these regions, provinces shall co-operate and compete, shall integrate transportation and energy and other systems and shall evolve somewhat different and unique social and cultural systems. And over-all, all these regions shall form the umbrella of a reorganized national Parliament.

I have almost finished, Mr. Speaker.

The relationship of the national umbrella and the regional well-being, aspirations and growth will be dynamic, changing and challenging. This, then, is, and will continue to be, the essence of Canada.

Patriation of the Constitution and the entrenchment of a Charter of Rights and Freedom is a giant leap, and a mandatory one, toward this vision of Canada, a vision which is destined and pre-ordained and beyond the simplistic rationalization of most of us.

Patriation of Canada's Constitution is the decisive stepping stone toward eradicating the fungus of Canadian separatism—both the eastern and western varieties. We are the most fortunate of all peoples on earth. We have been given a legacy by our pioneering parents, grandparents and great grandparents, which is unmatched. Let us build on this legacy. Let us not fail them and break this country apart for, if we do, they shall not sleep, and neither will we.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gus Mitges (Grey-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure and honour for me to take part in this debate. It is perhaps one of the most important debates in our history. It could quite conceivably change our lives and our way of living. It is a very important debate indeed.

There is no question that as this debate on the Constitution progresses, and as it becomes more complex, there is a danger