

*The Constitution*

on immigration and the successful telecommunications agreements in the mid-seventies. During the next round of federal-provincial negotiations, we should adopt as a principle that every bit of progress made should be entrenched in the Constitution. Had this been done in the past when the first ministers agreed on six or seven items out of 12 on the agenda, we would probably be much further ahead now in the division of powers. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, they were out to get package deals.

Also, Mr. Speaker, the input by Members of Parliament in this constitutional renewal process should not, as I have said, be restricted to this particular debate. It must continue at all stages following the passage of the proposed resolution. I think that future constitutional changes must not come only as a result of discussions between the federal and provincial ministers but must involve Members of Parliament. I think we can be proud of the way in which the joint committee operated, of the resolutions and amendments proposed by both opposition parties and by government members, and I believe that all members have an important role to play. I can only hope that this will continue in the future.

During the first debate last December, some members on both sides of the House seemed reluctant to take a stand on the proposed resolution as a whole, or on part of it, such as the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. My advice to them at the time was to take part in the work of the special committee to suggest improvements or express their views so that the final resolution might be the best and the most perfect possible.

Those who suggested changes, Mr. Speaker, and who obtained that the original resolution be amended deserve our congratulations. To those who did not succeed in imposing amendments or having them accepted, I would ask this question: can we afford at this time in our history to miss this unique opportunity to recognize the bilingual character of our country and its respect of human rights? While I respect those who intend to vote against the resolution, Mr. Speaker, I believe that, as representatives of the Canadian people, we must accept this proposal so that the government may act immediately by taking a first step in the right direction and by taking this important initiative of patriating the Constitution.

This leads me, Mr. Speaker, to speak once again briefly of those who accuse federal members of Parliament from Quebec of failing to comply with the wishes of their constituents and call us grovellers or sheep. Mr. Speaker, I do not believe that we have any lesson to take from these people. The day before yesterday, I was listening to the Quebec premier in a radio interview. He was saying that he did not understand why the Liberal members from Quebec were not more independent of their party. He did not understand why they did not vote against the proposed resolution. For my part, Mr. Speaker, I fail to understand why the Quebec premier would make such comments. We all know that in the four and a half years that the Parti Québécois has been in power in Quebec, PQ mem-

bers were never allowed to vote freely. How can those people suggest that we should not support our leader and our party when, for nearly five years, the great majority of PQ members have toed the party line as we have done ourselves. The Parti Québécois executive even decided after the referendum to change considerably its electoral platform by abolishing the principle of a referendum and pushing back the basic objective of that political party, namely, sovereignty, into the background among its priorities.

Where were those who now say that federal members have failed to protect the interests of their constituents, of their members and of the population? Where were those people who are now criticizing us? Why did they not protest when this decision was imposed by the Parti Québécois leaders? No, Mr. Speaker, we have nothing to learn from those people. They should know that in a parliamentary system like ours, the party line and party solidarity must be maintained and respected. If the personal views of a member are at too great a variance with the line adopted by his party, it is up to the individual member to take his responsibilities by accepting the decisions of his caucus or to consider the result a vote against it would have.

However, as a member has many opportunities to express his views at caucus meetings or in committee, he can reach an acceptable compromise by playing an active role. As I said earlier, perfection is impossible to attain and we should leave well enough alone. In the present situation, if I were to rely on the pundits, I could easily become a national hero. I would simply have to vote against the proposed resolution, and editorialists, Conservative and Parti Québécois members would congratulate me on my gesture. I would go back to Quebec City to a triumphant welcome by the people of my constituency who, in any case, probably never even voted for me. I would get all this because I would have gone against the wishes of the party which was elected by the population and against a leader who, for all practical purposes, is respected by Quebecers. By voting against it I would have prevented the federal government from imposing its will. There is nothing revolutionary in that. Those are things which have been claimed by the people of both Canada and Quebec for some time. The Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Broadbent) stated in an interview published in last Saturday's edition of *Le Devoir*, and I quote:

It is important that party leaders think of their country, and not only of their supporters. A true politician should be capable of entertaining such an attitude and of explaining it in the presence of his supporters. It will be difficult for my party, but it was necessary for the country.

It will be the same for the hon. members from Quebec. It will be the same for the Progressive Conservative members if they were against, and also for those who will have some reservations to make on the resolution. So where is the unfairness about the reform of the Constitution as proposed by the Government of Canada? Is it in patriation? Certainly not, since I know very few people who are against the idea of bringing back our Constitution, which is now in London.