

British North America Act

would mean, for a nation having reached or claiming to have reached maturity, to be master of its policies, its government, its parliament, its legislation, and not to be, in this field, under any unseemly trusteeship. It would also mean, as much as possible in this day and age, to be master of its economic and social life, to develop for itself and not for others its natural resources, to have the means to finance its administration, its institutions of learning and of social welfare.

Canon Lionel Groulx has been fighting for half a century, not only in Quebec, but throughout Canada, to help us acquire such mastery, both at the federal and provincial levels.

That amounts to one thing, Mr. Speaker. We want the provinces to enjoy as much autonomy as possible. Let Ottawa lift its embargoes when the development and even the full development of a province is at stake.

On the other hand, I am surprised to see the motion only concerns old age pensions and supplementary benefits. We should get to Westminster with an amendment or a final decision under which the constitution would come back to Canada. Then we could amend the constitution.

The fears being spread about a repatriated constitution, to the effect that quarrels and misunderstandings would spring up when the time came to amend the said constitution, are not worthy of consideration. The danger of misunderstandings must not prevent us from taking action. It is better to act and make mistakes than to do nothing, that is not to act. Then, one does not run the risk of making mistakes, but one does not act. Let us act, even if we run the risk of making mistakes. Besides, we all make mistakes, because we are human and there is no perfect human being.

Mr. Chapdelaine: Does the hon. member for Villeneuve allow me to ask him a question?

Mr. Caouette: Certainly.

Mr. Chapdelaine: What is the solution advocated by the hon. member to amend the constitution?

Mr. Caouette: To amend the constitution so as to give back to the provinces the control of money and credit, the control of their trade, their immigration, the full recovery and use of their taxation rights.

If those provisions were included in a constitutional reform, peace would be restored in Quebec, Ontario and other Canadian provinces.

Mr. Speaker, let us pass a piece of legislation to put a branch office of the Bank of Canada at the service of the provinces, which could use it to develop normally, and there will be no more wrangling between Quebec and Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia, Quebec and Alberta; there will not be misunderstanding but argument.

Mr. Speaker, the time allotted to me was quite shortened a few minutes ago, but I must just the same conclude my remarks. Before concluding, I wish to move, seconded by the hon. member for Roberval (Mr. Gauthier) the following amendment:

That the following words be added to section 94A after the words: "in these matters"; However, this amendment to the British North America Act will only apply to the provinces which will ask it.

I have French and English copies of this amendment.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment detracts in no way from the merits of section 94A, but it gives us the assurance that no province will be subject to undue pressure from federal authorities.

Those are the remarks we wanted to make about the amendment moved by the government.

In conclusion, I should like to draw the attention of the Minister of Justice to the statements made in this house by Liberal, Conservative and other members, to the effect that it is ridiculous that, in 1964, we should have to ask permission to amend a constitution which might not be ours at the present time.

If this constitution is not ours, let us leave it over there and draw up a constitution here, with the help of a committee on constitution, as suggested earlier by the hon. member for Sherbrooke. We shall then feel not only as people who loudly proclaim their independence and the sovereignty of their country, but who shall prove to the whole world that we do enjoy that sovereignty, whereas today, in 1964, we give indisputable proof that it is still the parliament at Westminster which decides what the Canadian parliament shall pass.

Let us become our own masters and start right away. Let us not wait another half century before asserting that we are, in Canada, Canadians in the best interests of the whole country.