

The Constitution

Miss Carney: This defining of Canada in terms of the self-interest of central Canada is evident in our tariff policies which protect eastern industries and limit the growth of western ones. It is evident in our transportation policies which discriminate against western products. It is evident in the concept, proposed by the Liberals, of mobility of labour. Mobility of labour is attractive in a province such as Ontario where 10,000 people recently applied for 1,000 jobs. But in Vancouver mobility of labour means the migration of 4,000 people a month to British Columbia. Mobility of labour means that every \$85,000 house is selling for a quarter of a million dollars. It means that British Columbians are being priced out of a chance to own their own homes in their own cities. Mobility of labour means that native Canadians who need the time to learn the skills to participate in job opportunities which are opening to them will be denied that right. The freedom to move should at least be matched by their freedom to stay.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Miss Carney: This country was built on the mobility of labour. We used to call it simply "going west". One hundred years ago, my own grandmother, Brigit Casey, left this very valley, not 16 miles from here, to go west to homestead and to ranch. She and her kinfolk, the Tierneys and the McKennas and the O'Keefes, did not go west to build a second-class province as the government proposes. And their kinswoman did not return to this valley as the MP for Vancouver Centre to enshrine in our Canadian Constitution a secondary role for B.C. or for any province of Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Miss Carney: This country was built on the mobility of labour. It was also built on fairness. You cannot enshrine one concept, the freedom to move, without enshrining equality.

I have said earlier that this government has defined the national interest in its self-interest because it has been of benefit for it to do so. But I do not understand why the government thinks that we, in the west, would accept the secondary role. B.C. joined confederation as a Crown colony, in its own right, in 1871. At that time we had choices. But British Columbians then, and now, felt that their interest was in the wider concept of a great confederation.

It is interesting to reflect on the tensions which existed 100 years ago between British Columbia and the Liberal government of the day. It is widely known that, as a condition of confederation, British Columbia was promised a railway. It is not so widely known that the Liberal government of the 1880s, which succeeded the Conservative government of Sir John A. Macdonald, tried to welsh on that promise. Instead of a railroad, the Liberal government offered B.C. a miserly \$750,000. The dispute over the railway and the threats of secession resounded in both Victoria and here in Ottawa. The trouble shooter, Lord Dufferin, was sent to mediate this dispute in 1876. He wrote to the Liberal prime minister at the time saying:

At this moment British Columbia is possessed by a frenzied sense, however unreasonable, of injury and wrong.

We still possess that injured sense of wrong.

We had in the 1880s a premier of B.C., and a member of this House named Amor DeCosmos. The man who called himself the lover of the world, loved the concept of Canada. He led the movement to bring the Crown colony of British Columbia into confederation. Yet, as he sat in this House as an MP, he heard his province described as greedy in defending its interests. The *Hansard* debates of the time record that Mr. DeCosmos said that he had heard from time to time in this House the grossest insults that had ever been offered to any people cast on the people of British Columbia. He said that B.C. had been charged with endeavouring to gain something from this dominion without giving anything in return.

Therefore, 101 years ago, in the forty-second year of the reign of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, during the first session of the Fourth Parliament of the Dominion of Canada convened on February 13, 1879, the *Debates* of the House of Commons record at page 1079 the following:

MR. DECOSMOS: I move for leave to introduce a bill, entitled an act to provide for the peaceful separation of British Columbia, seconded by any gentleman opposite who thinks proper to second it.

The motion was not seconded.

I refer to this action of 100 years ago because the separatist movement in B.C. is still alive. In a recent poll of my own riding, 75 per cent of the respondents reported that western separatism, in their view, had increased. As one respondent said, "I feel less Canadian".

I refer to this bill today to remind the hon. gentlemen opposite that should they wish to pursue a course which would result in inequitable treatment for British Columbians, a bill similar to that tabled by Amor DeCosmos will inevitably be introduced in this House. I cannot predict when that will happen, but the constitution of a country is a living document. It enshrines the terms under which we have agreed to live together. It determines our rights as human beings and our rights to property, as well as our basic freedoms as Canadians. The people of my province will begin to realize eventually that this constitution which the federal regional Liberal government seeks to impose on us will relegate British Columbians to second rate citizenship. They will never accept it.

Let there be no misunderstanding. British Columbia will not renounce Canada. Canada, as defined by the hon. members opposite, will renounce us in the west. And when they do so, if they do so, there will be no referendum in British Columbia. There will be no apprehended insurrection. If the Liberal government seeks to bring in this constitution and force us to accept a secondary role, we will just go our way.

● (2000)

In closing, let me remind you that history is on our side. The bill for the peaceful separation of B.C. was not passed. The railway was built. And in this spirit of fairness and of equity, we urge that the hon. members opposite reverse their present determination to proceed with the destruction of this country.