

my colleague from Kingston and the Islands and my colleague from Yukon (Mr. Nielsen), were able, with the help of the New Democratic Party members at the time, to have accepted for the first time a resolution by a committee, which was subsequently accepted by this whole House of Commons, which recognized the legitimacy of aboriginal title and rights in this country.

From my background of having known native people in my earliest days and having been involved in the defence of their rights since my time in Parliament, I certainly cannot be neutral on that question now, and my party does not intend to be neutral. It is for that reason that we have moved this amendment on aboriginal title.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: As for Quebec—

[Translation]

—I am the most bilingual citizen of High River, Alberta, and I have had a chance to learn not only the language but also something of the nature of the people of Quebec.

[English]

I cannot think of my country without Quebec and I have to say that I believe that is the position of virtually every member of this House of Commons.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: However, it is not good enough to be here to think good thoughts. We are here to act. That is what we were elected to do by our constituents across the country and that is our obligation.

I have the honour in this House to be the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. There is, perhaps, a special obligation on me, as there is on the Prime Minister and certain other officers of the House, to take that responsibility with a particular seriousness. But that responsibility falls upon all of us. It is, perhaps, particularly because of my disinterest in some of these questions that I can move some of the amendments and speak to them as I have today. I am obviously not a woman—one of the 52 per cent majority which women constitute in this country; I am among the minority. I am not a Canadian of Inuit, Indian or aboriginal ancestry. I am not a Quebecer, except in spirit. Perhaps I have a special capacity, a special quality, to come here to ask others who are not native, women, Quebecers—and if they are Quebecers, not supporters of the Parti Québécois—to recognize the tremendous importance to Canada of having a Constitution which will respect the rights and equality of women, underline the rights of the aboriginal people, and be large enough to include and make the people of Quebec feel comfortably at home.

That is the purpose of our amendment and that is the purpose of our party. That, I hope, will be the result of our deliberations and our debate on this resolution which is now before us.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Constitution

Madam Speaker: I am sure members of the House will appreciate that, because of the drafting technicalities, it is important that I reserve judgment on the acceptability of this motion.

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, for more than 100 years we, as a nation, have been in pursuit of a completely autonomous nationhood. For more than 100 years this goal has eluded us. In these days we are now approaching success at last. In short, the final stage of the process is under way.

Since the birth of our movement as a party in the 1930s, we, along with others, have been in the forefront in advocating the need for an independent Constitution, a charter of rights and a working amending formula to meet the needs of the future evolution of our country. We have also said that the uniqueness and grandeur of the province of Quebec must forever be a cherished and crucial consideration in constitutional change. Quebec is not and never will be a province just like the others. It adds in its vitality, its architecture, by its composers, filmmakers and poets, a richness and diversity for which all Canadians can be thankful.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: Finally, in recent years our party has become aware, at long last, of the moral claims of Canadian women and the native people of our land. It would be nice to be able to say that politicians, not only in our party but other parties, have been aware of the concerns of women and native people for many years and, indeed, decades. But that would do injustice to the truth. We all know that in this Parliament and in the legislatures across the country the concerns of the native people and the legitimate claims of Canadian women have been on the political agenda for all too short a time in our history.

In approaching constitutional change, then, we have these concerns and these values. When the process of constitutional change began in a serious way last fall, we said, along with others, that now is the time to act and create a fully independent Canada within a political framework that would make possible the creation of a society that is at once just and exciting, a society that is at the same time peaceful and humane.

As we all know, the process has not been an easy one. It has not been, to put it euphemistically, without tension. These tensions have revealed themselves in all our regions, in all our institutions and in all our political parties. I emphasize that this situation has occurred during every period of our history since the birth pains of nationhood were being experienced. There was no reason for Canada to have been an exception and we were not.

Earlier today the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chrétien) appropriately paid tribute to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and the first ministers who met not long ago to develop a new accord. I want to join, on behalf of my colleagues, with the Minister of Justice in paying tribute to those men, representing