

Interim Supply

formula would impose a serious and perhaps fatal barrier to any changes in the Constitution of Canada, which the present dynamic needs of Canada require. It may well be that the people of Quebec will desire to have the powers of the Legislative Council emasculated or the Council totally abolished. It is quite a different thing, however, when the necessary constitutional amendments are to be rushed through without consultation with the people, without adequate discussion in Parliament, and for the purpose of fixing on the people of Canada a disastrous constitutional strait-jacket. It seems to me that for the sake of expediency, and political expediency at that, the course of constitutionality and legality—and indeed of Parliamentary control—is being abandoned in indecent haste. I think this Parliament should resent the way in which something as important as an amendment to our Constitution has been rushed through without even asking Parliament's approval.

In stating my view I should like it to be noted that I am repeating what has already been said by the provincial council of the New Democratic Party of Quebec. Although it made clear its opposition to non-elected legislative bodies, including the Senate of Canada and the Legislative Council of Quebec, it expressed profound disquiet as to the method adopted by the Lesage Government in the absence of consultation with the people of that province. I should like to express our profound disquiet with regard to this proposed amendment—it is true it comes from the Province of Quebec—which is to be forwarded to the Queen, presumably to be placed before her advisers in the United Kingdom. We regret, too, that instead of bringing this matter forward in the first instance so that it could be debated on a proper resolution, the Government should have chosen another course, making it necessary for us to deal with this important subject on a supply motion in the dying days of a session.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Would the hon. Member not agree that the matter in question involves an amendment to the constitution; the advice which the executive will give to Her Majesty will be to the effect that the matter in question involves an amendment to the constitution of Quebec and is of concern to that province only—not to this Parliament, not to the laws of Canada but only to the Province of Quebec? Would the hon. gentleman not agree that, to use the language of

Hodges *v.* The Queen, this is “purely a local matter”?

Mr. Brewin: No, I certainly do not agree with the interpretation placed on this matter by the Secretary of State for External Affairs. It could have concerned the Province of Quebec solely if the legislature of that province had been able to act. I would say that had the people of Quebec been consulted, I, for one, would have been ready to put the stamp of approval on it within this Parliament. But I do not think there is any constitutional correctness in the course which has been adopted by the Cabinet or the executive of this Parliament in sending this thing forward. After all, the Cabinet did receive a petition from a current legislative body, the Legislative Council, not to send it forward. I say Members opposite have interfered in the affairs of Quebec by the course they have taken, and I regret they have done so.

Mr. Patterson: Had the circumstances been different I would have dealt at greater length with the subjects I am now about to raise. I will now refer to them briefly in the hope that during the recess the Government will give these matters consideration and come forward with a solution to them.

I wish to speak of one or two matters concerning veterans affairs. The first concerns disability pensions. We all know that some time ago representations were made to the department regarding the necessity for substantial increases in disability pensions. Veterans look forward to something definite in this regard. The organizations speaking on their behalf expected that the Minister would bring in recommendations resulting in substantial upward revision of these pensions. However, some time ago the hon. gentleman rose to say there would be 10 per cent increase in these pensions.

Reactions on the part of veterans generally and the organizations representing them were critical of this announcement, and the reason is easy to recognize. It is disgraceful that some of these men should have to get by on the very small pensions they are receiving. Since this subject has been raised on a number of occasions, and representations have been made to the Minister of Veterans Affairs concerning it, I trust that during the next few months the whole matter will be considered most carefully—that the whole scheme of disability pensions will be thoroughly analysed and that the Department will come forward at an early

[Mr. Brewin.]