

The Constitution

Mr. Patterson: Someone said "Right on." I believe that it is, in a certain way which I will explain in a moment. There is another factor ignored by the Liberals, conveniently so because it would undermine the position of the Liberal party. That factor is that the provinces also speak for all Canadians.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An hon. Member: Nonsense.

Mr. Patterson: Canada is a federal state. It is made up of ten provinces of equal constitutional power and status. As Dawson states in "The Government of Canada", at page 82:

The powers of the provinces are as full and as complete as those of the dominion within the areas allotted by the BNA Act and both dominion and provincial legislatures may delegate their authority to other bodies of their own creation but not to each other.

The problem with the proposal before us is that it takes from the provinces and gives to a federally appointed court certain matters which are within the exclusive jurisdiction of the provinces. What is worse, it is being done without the consent of the provinces.

● (2110)

We talk about property rights, educational rights and all these other things. At the present time they are under the jurisdiction of the provincial governments. Therefore I say that all the provincial governments speak on behalf of all Canadians within their jurisdictional rights and the federal government speaks on federal rights. I see an hon. member shaking his head. That is the problem with the Liberals; they are trying to centre everything in Ottawa.

I remember when the Prime Minister was minister of justice. He made the statement that he looked upon his role as minister of justice as charting the course of society for the future. I believe that we have to pay attention to that fact. It is a position that is denied and rejected by this whole package. It is breaking down the system of government we have in Canada where federal and provincial representatives deal with their own jurisdictional responsibilities.

I want to go on to the formula proposed and presented for our consideration in the matter of amending the Constitution. I believe, of course, we should not be dealing with this here at this time. We should be dealing with the patriation of the Constitution with an amending formula. However, as far as the rest is concerned, it should await the bringing back to Canada of our Constitution. That is the proposal we have made. It is the only reasonable and sensible one. The reason it is not being done is that the Prime Minister knows he would have great difficulty in getting some of his pet propositions through his Canadian Parliament.

The Prime Minister wishes to enshrine forever the inequality of provinces. We in western Canada are prohibited forever from sharing as equal partners in our federation. This is totally unacceptable to those in British Columbia and, as my friend from Wetaskiwin pointed out, in the province of Alberta as well. The proposed amending formula will discriminate pro-

foundly against British Columbia because we find in the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia—British Columbia has 40 per cent of the population—their combined population is fully 70 per cent of the western population.

What this amending formula would do is to permit two western provinces containing 30 per cent of the population to bring about constitutional change that would be contrary to the interests of the other 70 per cent. This is unfair, unreasonable and discriminatory as far as British Columbia is concerned. The population projections for the year 2001 show that British Columbia will have 45 per cent of the population of the provinces of Western Canada. We find here the possibility of 77 per cent of the western population being dominated by 23 per cent of the population.

Further to this particular issue, we find the federal proposal is put forth in the form of a proposal to transfer the ownership of natural gas to the federal government. For approval, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, two provinces, would need to have only 16 per cent of the population in order to approve that proposition. Rejection would require three provinces. This is all up against the other proposition that the provinces of Ontario and Quebec have a veto. Each has a veto over the whole thing.

That shows the position in which British Columbia can be placed if a proposal is advanced by the federal government regarding the transfer of natural gas, for example. British Columbia will not accept that. If you think that alienation is growing in the west, you might as well understand why. Alienation in the west, if this goes through, will see a change into something far more dangerous than just a resentment or an alienation and a feeling that British Columbia is not wanted here, that all that counts is central Canada. That is not acceptable.

The Prime Minister has the view that whatever he does, even if it means the destruction of our country, is justified if he can obtain his own peculiar view of Canada. He stated on one occasion, "I came to Ottawa to save Quebec, someone else will have to save the west". Perhaps it will take God himself to do that.

Look at this Constitution. It shows what contempt the Prime Minister has for western Canada. No wonder he is not getting any members from there.

We feel that through negotiations in the spirit of fair play, we could solve these historic problems in a way that would permit British Columbia to be a full and equal partner in confederation. However, I warn the Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice that if they proceed on this dangerous course, British Columbians will not tolerate it. We do not want to be a region of second-class citizens behind the perpetual veto of Ontario and Quebec. We do not want to become third-class citizens behind Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

British Columbia did not come into confederation to become subservient to the rest of Canada in any way. We have to remember that British Columbia did not come into confederation when it was first established; it came in later. It came in