

Government Orders

to pick up such a significant nuance, one that could certainly, under certain circumstances, cause major legal problems.

I do not know whether the government intended to be as formally committed as in the French clause or to have a way out like in the English one. I do not know what they intend to do. Perhaps they should tell us which reflects their true intentions and make sure both versions reflect the same legal reality.

I would like to add that, if this is good for Prince Edward Island—and it is—and if the federal government is able to make financial commitments that I would describe as reasonable to ensure substantial economic development in Prince Edward Island for the 125,000 residents of the island, one can wonder why the federal government no longer conducts this kind of projects which in the past have prompted massively enthusiastic responses in terms of economic development. I am thinking of the HST, the high speed train, in particular.

If the government saw fit—and rightly so—in the interest of 125,000 people to get involved in this major project which we support, it would seem to me that, for the 16 million people of Quebec and Ontario, in the interest of connecting the economic heartland of Canada to the United States, the largest economic market place all of us have access to, it may be worthwhile to look into putting into place a link, another type of link, a railway link, taking advantage of the very high technology offered by the HST as part of the same project.

I will not elaborate on this, as some of my colleagues will address this specific issue, but I do urge the government to go further in the direction it is taking today and to ensure that reasonable, practical and forward-looking major projects are initiated.

Finally, I cannot help but notice that, in response to an obvious need, the government has decided to reopen the Constitution. We know that the Prime Minister and his government are claiming left and right that they do not intend to talk about the Constitution: "We will not touch the Constitution. I have absolutely no desire to touch the Constitution". It has become a taboo subject, except when there is a need to address this issue.

There is such a need today and the government, in a practical and realistic fashion, has decided to do what must be done. It is no sin to touch the Constitution when it must be done. And, as it must be done, we are supporting today's motion.

I know that, as far as the Bloc Québécois's designs for Quebec are concerned, it is not a matter of reopening the Constitution to achieve Quebec's sovereignty; such a decision will be made democratically in due course by Quebecers themselves. As for the current, very serious debate on native self-government and the extremely pressing and critical issues being raised, I think that the leader of Canada's First Nations, Mr. Mercredi, is right

in saying that the Constitution should be reopened in this case. We think that, if the government can accommodate this economic need in the case of Prince Edward Island, it should also fill this more urgent, political, social, even ethical need to take steps that will, in the long run, solve the native problem.

We cannot go on like this, as we are experiencing numerous repercussions in every respect. First of all, from a social standpoint, the sad picture of what is happening in some reserves, the extreme hardships suffered by the people should be enough to convince us that we need well thought out instead of piecemeal solutions and that the demand for native self-government in a framework and under conditions that are appropriate should be submitted to the government, which should respond with the same realism it is showing today in recognition of the need to establish a fixed link between Prince Edward Island and the mainland.

• (1050)

I would like to conclude by appropriating an argument invoked by the minister. The minister, perhaps thinking that the Bloc Québécois would oppose this measure, urged us not to raise objections and to respect the will expressed by the people of Prince Edward Island in a democratic referendum. He made a pressing, emotional appeal to respect public opinion as expressed in a democratic referendum.

We are in total agreement with the minister today and we will ask him to stand by his words in due course, if and when Quebec makes the decision we are hoping it will make.

[*English*]

Mr. Stephen Harper (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to this constitutional resolution under section 43 of the Constitution Act, 1982 to amend the Prince Edward Island terms of union in the schedule, sections 1 and 2. The purpose of the resolution is of course as stated, to allow the substitution of a bridge for a ferry.

This particular resolution comes from a government committed to not open the Constitution, to not even remotely discuss constitutional questions. At least that is the position as we have understood it. But is it really its position to act that way?

Already this is the second constitutional amendment being passed since the defeat of the Charlottetown accord. It is in addition to a number of extra constitutional measures that are either being taken or being considered, such as aboriginal self-government or federal-provincial division of powers and overlap and duplication.

Therefore the position that we are not going to talk about or amend the Constitution or deal with constitutional questions seems increasingly to be restricted to one particular issue, which is the Senate. When it comes to the Senate we will not discuss