

The Constitution

replaced it. Thus the people of New Brunswick were the only ones ever consulted about the confederation proposals and they left no doubt of their opposition. Premier Charles Tupper of Nova Scotia did not dare to lay the resolutions before the legislature, so unpopular were they—

What finally brought about the creation of the Dominion of Canada was the perseverance of the Fathers of Confederation and external pressures from the United States and Britain.

War was imminent with the United States because of the northern states feeling their oats, having defeated the south, and because of the Irish-American Fenians. The article continues:

The role of the British government was of decisive importance in the achievement of confederation. Union would better enable the colonies to defend themselves . . . Publicly, the British government made widely known to maritimers its "strong and deliberate opinion" that union of the colonies was "an object much to be desired."

Privately, the lieutenant-governor of New Brunswick was told in no uncertain terms that he was to work zealously to promote confederation. This he proceeded to do, taking advantage of the Fenian menace in the spring of 1866 to turn the anti-Confederate government out of office by means that were of dubious constitutionality. In the ensuing elections the pro-confederation forces were returned to office, but not on the issue of confederation.

The lieutenant-governor of Nova Scotia, who had opposed confederation, was replaced by a Nova Scotian hero of the Crimean War with instructions to vigorously promote it. By these and other means, the reluctant maritimers were dragged into the union.

It was only after the passage of the British North American Act through the British Parliament in March 1867 and the creation of the Dominion of Canada on July 1, that the Fathers submitted their handiwork to the judgment of the people. In the elections for the first Parliament of Canada the confederation coalition, now headed by Sir John A. Macdonald, won a majority in Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick, but was disastrously defeated in Nova Scotia . . .

The premier of Nova Scotia, William Annand, and Joseph Howe led a delegation of provincial and federal representatives to London to demand that the British government "release them from the toils of confederation into which they had been dragged against their will", which of course was clearly the case . . . the British government absolutely declined to allow Nova Scotia out of confederation.

I would like to ask any of the members to my right whether they think that confederation was such a bad deal, the confederation that was brought about without the kind of unanimity for which they ask for. I would like to say to my friends on the right "I'm sorry, you may be right to want a broader base of support, but you are not right in insisting that we must have unanimity."

While I much prefer old John A. to the person who fills that seat today, John A. was just as bad at ramming things down folks' throats.

I should like now to turn my comments to some of the other points in this package. I would like to comment on the amending formula, the so-called Victoria formula. On balance, I suppose it is as good as any of the formulas for amending the Constitution that have been put forward. I can agree with the notion that we divide the country into four regions and have a veto and a particular vote on future amendments, but there is one point that I find troubling. As a westerner, it puzzles me a bit. I must point out that this is probably the main complaint I am getting from constituents in my riding. It refers to the fact that in the western region we still have the requirement that two provinces representing 50 per cent of the population have

to agree to future amendments, whereas in the maritime sector this is not the case.

This was changed to accommodate Prince Edward Island. The people in my province and the people of Saskatchewan wonder why this same accommodation cannot be made for Manitoba and Saskatchewan. It is a small point. I have been told that the reason the maritime provinces got this concession was that their premiers requested it and the reason the western region did not get it was that the premiers of the western provinces did not request it.

This is not constitution-making; this is political gamesmanship. It is a small point that reinforces my earlier point about western alienation. If this government really wants to address western alienation, they should look at these very small points. It would not take very much to give the same concession to the western region with regard to the 50 per cent population rule.

I must point out that I find very distasteful the Conservative approach to this question. They recognize it is a bit of a problem, but to print ads in newspapers across western Canada which, as I mentioned earlier, really pander to the prejudices that try to create a hatred among westerners for central Canadians is simply not a way in which I would like to build the future of this country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): That accusation is not so, and you know it.

Mr. Sargeant: Read this. I should like now to make some comments on the equalization and the provincial resources parts of this Constitution. I will only say a few words because others in this caucus have addressed this issue and we are all in agreement on it. I consider both of these to be very important issues. They are very important steps that can be used to build this nation which I envision.

The resource amendment will allow the provinces to consolidate their base, to use their non-renewable resources as a base upon which to build a secure and diversified economic structure. The equalization formula is one that is very important to this party as a democratic socialist party, where rich parts of the country assist the poorer parts.

There are no arguments that some provinces are wealthier than others. For this reason we believe in the constitutionalizing of the concept of equalization. We consider it to be a major step at this time. In the type of Canada of which I spoke earlier, the need for such entrenchment would be irrelevant. Once Canada becomes the truly egalitarian state that I visualize, equitable distribution of wealth will be a matter of course. May I call it four o'clock, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It being four o'clock p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business, as listed on today's Order Paper, namely public bills, notices of motions, private bills.