

*The Constitution*

● (1730)

*[Translation]*

As a whole, Mr. Speaker, the resolution proposed by the Government of Canada has already gained support from the majority of members in the House, from two provinces—a third one is still sitting on the fence—from several provincial political parties, and from most of the groups which gave evidence at the public hearings of the special committee as a result of the amendments moved by the Minister of Justice.

We know that the people of Canada are asking for a change and the proposed resolution fulfils their expectations. That does not mean that the federal project is altogether perfect; it has to be seen as a tool which will enable us to break out of the deadlock. As for me, that tool meets two significant criteria. First of all, Mr. Speaker, I admit that the unilateral amending formula imposes a rhythm and new rules which do not suit all provincial governments. But one essential fact remains for us members from Quebec, namely, that the government of Quebec and all Quebecers maintain their right of veto and that in future no constitutional change can be made without their consent. I consider that this right of veto is a prerequisite condition for anyone who acknowledges the specificity of Quebec. We have seen that members of the opposition, not unlike the provinces, have so far failed to agree on an amending formula. Once we had the Vancouver formula, now we have Senator Tremblay's formula. Mr. Speaker, what can we say about the Vancouver formula? We can say that it is endorsed by the Parti Québécois and by several provincial Conservative governments. What is the formula? It allows opting out, one of its great qualities, according to the Quebec premier. For someone who is bent on opting out to the extreme and separate from his country, of course, he can find something interesting in a formula under which he can withdraw from all federal programs and reject certain constitutional provisions. But that is certainly not the wish of hon. members from Quebec.

With regard to Senator Tremblay's formula I am still quite astonished to realize that, for all practical purposes and depending on economic circumstances, Quebec would lose its rights of veto. If the final count were to be 70-30, for all practical purposes Quebec would be in an extremely embarrassing situation, whereas with the amending formula of the Victoria charter Quebecers, representing 25 per cent of the population, would be guaranteed that no change can be made without their consent. Naturally, Mr. Speaker, any formula which is criticized throughout Canada because it is overly generous to Quebec can indeed be an option to which the Parti Québécois would object. But, Mr. Speaker, I think it is our duty as Liberal members from Quebec to make sure that the Victoria formula is the strict minimum.

Second, I want to speak in favour of the charter of rights and freedoms, particularly the section about mobility rights, labour mobility, and the right to education in the language of

the minority. As Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Immigration, I consider that enshrining those rights in the Constitution is essential if we want to make sure that all Canadians participate in the economic growth of the larger regions of Canada. We now hear the Quebec government advertise that this will take jobs away from Quebecers. In my opinion, it is quite clear that according to all the studies that have been made recently that there are more Quebecers leaving their province to find jobs elsewhere in Canada than there are other Canadians entering that province "to steal our jobs" as they say. When you think of the economic boom in the west and the development in Newfoundland and Labrador Quebecers will certainly not be penalized in being given the right to share these jobs which are the jobs of the future in our country.

The fact is that this must be associated with another factor; the access to French schools. You cannot ask Quebecers to leave their province and get stranded in another province where they will not have the right to send their children to French schools. I also think that this is a change that is perhaps not as far-reaching as one would have wished, but at least it gives assurance to those Quebecers that they will benefit from those jobs that will be created all across Canada. It is certain that if they did not have this right, they would be reluctant to go. Now at least they have the assurance that they will have access to French schools.

The same applies to the entrenchment of the principle of equalization which gives the economy an additional stability. It is the concept of sharing that is now recognized by most Canadians and which has enabled Canada to become one of the most prosperous countries in the world. I think that it should be entrenched in the Constitution. The equalization principle will force both levels of government to favor economic development in order to reduce inequality of opportunities and in order to provide Canadians with essential services that are of acceptable quality. By entrenching this concept of sharing we are ensuring the future of Canadians in keeping with a tradition which was established in the early days of this country.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, the proposed resolution is but one stage which will launch the renewal process for which we have been waiting for 54 years. After patriation, the provinces will have to come back to the table to negotiate and reach some agreement, as the Quebec government is so fond of saying in its ads. At that time, the premiers can put forward their proposals for an equitable division of powers. We must recognize, Mr. Speaker, that the provinces have several justifiable demands. Moreover, most of the requests made in the sixties were recognized by the Pearson government.

Also, the changes and reform called for in 1968, 1969 and 1970 were accepted by the present Prime Minister. Many people seem to have forgotten the progress made in the social field after the Victoria conference. What about the agreements