

The Constitution

because of the provinces that have been so abused by the government—Newfoundland, Alberta and the rest of them—it has been mainly because the French Canadian people of Quebec did not feel that their province had sufficient powers and jurisdiction to protect them in their homeland of Quebec.

That is the debate which I have been following since the 1940s. That is the debate which I have heard introduced by premiers of Quebec ever since the late 1940s, that they did not feel under the present system they had sufficient powers and jurisdiction in the province of Quebec to protect the rights and responsibilities of their own French Canadian people. Suddenly this summer after the referendum, in which the Prime Minister at no time during the referendum ever said to the people of Quebec, "Vote no against the referendum and, if you do, I am going to restrict your provincial powers", he has a change of mind. He was going to double track the country, now he is doublecrossing the Quebecers.

After getting the people of Quebec to say no in the referendum, he is now turning around and restricting the powers and responsibilities of the province of Quebec as well as of the other nine provinces. It is a shameful turn-around from what was promised to the people of Quebec in the referendum. The people who have introduced this issue in Canada over the past 30 years are now having imposed on them something which is 100 per cent opposite to what they wanted.

We have a strong central government now. We should pay no attention to the pretence that poor granny Trudeau is up here with a weak federal government and he is going to be severely abused and assaulted by these ten rapacious premiers. It is untrue. The Prime Minister has the power to disallow provincial legislation or have it reserved by the lieutenant governor. He has the power to have a work declared to be for the general advantage of Canada. He can take over any industry in the country through a proclamation passed by this House. These are all federal powers which the Prime Minister has today. Under section 92(10)(a) he has the power with respect to works or undertakings between the provinces, but he will not use this section to aid the province of Newfoundland.

The Prime Minister will not work to declare a hydro transmission line from Labrador to, say, New York, Ontario or New Brunswick, to be to the general advantage of Canada and to stop the tyranny under which we have suffered in Newfoundland since 1965 so that we can transmit our electricity across Quebec.

● (1700)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Collette) on a point of order.

Mr. Collette: Mr. Speaker, we would be agreeable to sitting through private members' hour. The item which will be set aside is in the name of the hon. member for Richmond-South Delta (Mr. Siddon). I must reiterate, however, that the House will take its normal adjournment at six o'clock. We will just go until six o'clock, but through private members' hour.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Is there unanimous agreement that the House dispense with private members' hour?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is so ordered. The hon. member for Richmond-South Delta (Mr. Siddon) on a point of order.

Mr. Siddon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I approach this request with mixed feelings because my private members' bill was to come before the House. I am faced with a choice between freshwater fish and the future of our country. I feel, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I can understand the hon. member's problem, but all the Chair can do at this time is ask the House if there is unanimous consent to dispense with private members' hour. Is there?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There being unanimous consent, the Chair must recognize the hon. member for St. John's West.

Mr. Crosbie: Mr. Speaker, the federal government has these powers now, but it often chooses not to exercise them because it does not think that the people of Canada would support the exercise. Mr. Speaker, we support bringing the BNA Act back from the United Kingdom to Canada—and an amending formula as well. But we do not support the scurvy plot that the Government of Canada is instituting—that because it would not have the powers after the constitution is brought back to do what it now proposes, it should have it done in the United Kingdom in Parliament there first, because they think that what would be illegal here would be legal there.

The Prime Minister is the last of the old colonial boys. He is not asking us just to improve and bring back the constitution; he wants it changed fundamentally before it ever comes here. We cannot accept that and we are not going to accept the concept of a referendum.

The Minister of National Revenue referred to Premier Peckford's worries about denominational education and the Labrador boundary. Section 43 of this act is meaningless. It can be changed. If this can be done today, any Government of Canada in the future with a majority in Parliament can change it again. They could use the referendum to go over the heads of the provinces and have any section of the act changed. So section 43 is meaningless. There is no protection for Newfoundland's denominational education, there is no protection for the Newfoundland boundary with Quebec, there is no protection for any provincial right in the constitution whatsoever if what the government attempts to do now is carried through and they are given the power to have a referendum and to decide what powers are necessary to amend the act and decide who has to agree. None of us have any protection.

The charter of human rights is meaningless, and if I had the time I would go into that. It can be changed at any time by the