

*Supply*

What this trend toward group rights has done, in our view, is not just detract from the fundamental principle of the individual and the individual's rights within the collectivity but has also had the effect, in our view, of a loss of our greater sense of collective identity as a nation.

I would reflect on Andrew Coyne's editorial yesterday in the *Globe and Mail* where he noted that group rights and its linkage to comprehensive philosophy of political victimology had led us to see ourselves increasingly as a nation of victim groups and ultimately as a victim nation, one without identity or power.

As Reformers we propose that we get back to the roots of liberal democracy, that we reaffirm the principles of democracy in a modern age and manifest political equality through institutional reform. Specifically we advocate free votes for the people's representatives in the Parliament of Canada, direct democracy among the population at large, introducing in the modern age with our educated populations mechanisms of referendum, initiative and recall, and even in the area of constitutional change, mechanisms like constitutional conventions and popular ratification.

The equality of citizens does not preclude the uniqueness of citizens. We hear objections whenever we raise this point. We recognize there are all kinds of communal and individual identities within the country. We are suggesting the Government of Canada should concentrate its efforts on the responsibility for the promotion of our collective identity as a nation rather than the focus it has had in the past generation on things like official multiculturalism or the promotion of Canada as a federation of two founding peoples: the English and the French.

In our view we should be going toward more race, culture, language neutral concepts of our nationhood. Defining a country as a union of founding peoples, English and French, in this day and age is to Reformers as ridiculous as it would be to define it as a nation of two founding religions: the Protestants and the Catholics.

I would also like to speak about the equality of provinces, the second portion of that clause. This refers, in our view, to what is a fundamental principle of a federation. The fact that we are a federation of provinces was clearly recognized in the 1867 Confederation constitution and quite properly so since it superseded the disastrous binational unitary state of 1841 to 1867. In Canada we have not always lived up to the concept of equality of provinces. My province of Alberta and the prairie provinces generally were deliberately created as inferior political units after Confederation, an error that was not corrected for decades.

• (1255)

At all times, because of the way our parliamentary system unfolded, small provinces have found themselves at the federal

level subjected to the domination of the central provinces of Ontario and Quebec through the systematic skew of power in the House of Commons and the decline of the Senate as an effective political institution.

Later all provinces, even the large provinces, have found problems in the federation as an increasingly unbalanced federal spending power has been able to override clear areas of provincial jurisdiction. This breakdown of division of powers has occurred for both the federal and provincial governments.

We propose as Reformers to reaffirm our commitment to provincial equality through institutional reform and also through re-establishing a balanced division of powers in the federation. I have spoken many times in the House of our hope to reform the Senate based on the triple-E model, to restore the Senate as an effective second Chamber through electing senators and providing equal representation to the provinces. In other words, we want a Senate that is the kind of effective regional Chamber that the Fathers of Confederation had intended so that in the Parliament of Canada federal law-making is more than a simple domination of small provinces by large provinces.

*[Translation]*

This concern for regional representation is not only a matter for small provinces; it is also a concern for small regions in large provinces like British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec as well. Indeed, we hope to have a provision in a reformed Senate for regional representation within large provinces, for example, for the Gaspé and the North Shore in Quebec or for northern Ontario.

Of course, when we speak of the equality of provinces in this motion, we also speak of their uniqueness. Our critics will say, "Of course you just want to see Quebec as a province like the others." Of course not. Equality does not mean identity. The federal principle does not mean that the provinces are identical; it means that they share certain values and policies, for example, the economic criteria mentioned in the motion, but the federal principle also means that provinces have their distinct character and uniqueness through the division of powers in a federal state. Canada's uniqueness includes, for example, such things as the cultural realities in the province of Quebec, language, of course, and certain geographical realities such as natural resources in the western provinces. In a federal state, these things should be in provincial jurisdiction and the division of power should be respected in a developed federal state.

*[English]*

In conclusion, I have spoken in the context both of equality and uniqueness of provinces, of many things that are in Canada today and also things we would like to see changed. Some of the