

The dimension I would like to develop is merely this. My privilege, my reputation, and my honour as a member of this House have been degraded because members of the government are proclaiming around the country, in my name and in the name of all members of this Parliament, slogans and viewpoints that I believe not merely to be misleading but in many respects to be downright dishonest.

The point about dishonesty has already been made, Madam Speaker, and it would not be proper to make that allegation if I could not be given—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Siddon: It would not be proper to make the allegation that such advertisements are misleading or dishonest if I was not permitted a few moments to expand on that by giving some examples.

The Minister of State for Multiculturalism told us earlier today about the education content of these advertisements which depict geese flying, beavers, and the rest. For my part I am most offended by the billboards I see around Canada. For example, let me quote from a television advertisement, and I am sure it must be on a billboard somewhere in the country, and this is part of the government's advertising campaign:

It's over a hundred years since our constitution was written for us.

It is, indeed, over 100 years since the British North America Act was proclaimed, but it was prepared by Canadians and they did that for us. Sure, they are dead, but that did not stop the process of revising and updating the BNA Act which is in fact our constitution.

The foregoing quotation is obviously directed at citizens in this country who have virtually no knowledge of our history or of how the British North America Act was drafted, and it would lead them to believe that the text of the BNA Act was prepared somewhere else than in Canada by people other than Canadians. The truth of the matter is that the Fathers of Confederation were Canadians who worked together in a spirit of good will to create this nation, once a proud nation.

The second quotation, and I am only going to use two or three more if I may, appeared on big billboards across the country and read as follows:

Practically the only thing that hasn't changed is the constitution.

Is that or is that not true, Madam Speaker? I suggest it is downright incorrect. First ministers' conferences represent a distinctively Canadian innovation. Over the years these conferences between provincial and federal ministers have contributed to the amendment and, yes, the reconstitution of the BNA Act in a gradual and orderly manner. For example, Madam Speaker, regional equalization was unheard of in 1867, yet it now forms an integral part of the federal existence. The "have" provinces share generously with those less fortunate. And whoever heard of the women's franchise to vote in 1867? These and many other changes to our constitution have evolved with time, and I submit the slogan is incorrect.

A third and most important example of a slogan which many people in my part of Canada, at least, are very deeply

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offended by, reads as follows, and this appears on big billboards:

A new constitution: Make it right, make it work, make it ours.

It does not take an intricate mind to conclude that this slogan suggests that the BNA Act is wrong. This implies that the present BNA Act does not work and that it is not ours. It has always been ours, because Canadians wrote it. What was wrong with a former group of colonies going together to the British Parliament with the request that they be given authority to form a federal state within the family of British parliamentary governments, and to make it work? The implication is that it does not work.

It takes trust and confidence between partners in a confederation to make the partnership work, and regrettably that trust and confidence have been eroded and virtually destroyed from one end of this country to another by a government which goes around picking fights with the provinces and their premiers.

I would like now, if I might, to lead to a final quotation which is prominently displayed in the subways of Toronto and on the streets of Vancouver and Charlottetown. This quotation—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. May I ask the co-operation of the hon. member to please focus on the reasons for which he thinks there is a prima facie case of privilege? Hon. members are not serving their cause well if they do not address themselves to that particular point because, if they do not, I will not have their arguments in order to judge the case. They are obviously intervening in this debate in order to enlighten me. I would very much like to be enlightened, and I ask the hon. member to focus on those reasons.

• (1610)

Mr. Siddon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think I tried to express my point at the opening of my remarks, and I will repeat it. I am a member of this House equal to every other member of this House, and when the Minister of State for Multiculturalism proclaims to the country that his advertising campaign speaks for me and has the consent of this House, and at least the implied support of all members of this House, then my reputation and my integrity are questioned. I go home to my constituency and it is said, "But one sign says 'Let's work together to build a better Canada now.'" That is a slogan across the land, and who is working together? Who is working together to build a better country?

I believe in judging the merits of the motion put by my colleague, the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath), that your Honour has to recognize that the integrity of every member of this House is in question if the slogans the government is proclaiming across the land are misleading and untrue and cast a pall of doubt over my reputation and the reputation of everyone else in this country.