

The Constitution

a provincially elected group of politicians happened not to like? The greatest fraud of all perpetuated by the Tory party lies in their not explaining that it is quite possible that, in the future, a provincially elected government might hold quite different views on a narrow constitutional question from the majority of the people in the province. That happened last year in Quebec. But the premiers tell us that they, and not the people, will decide what rights the people in a particular province shall have. I find it hard to believe that the majority of the people in Manitoba are against the rights which are outlined, or that the people of Saskatchewan or Nova Scotia are really against the charter of rights. It is just not believable.

Nothing which has been presented to this Parliament in the nearly nine years that I have been a member is as easy to understand as this constitutional proposal which we have been discussing for five months, or for much longer. I would point out to members opposite that the original debate on confederation lasted only five weeks.

Mr. Taylor: So what?

Mr. Stollery: This constitutional proposal is simple and clear. In my opinion it is a good thing for future Canadians, a good thing for this country. The members opposite obviously say no.

The hon. member for Bow River (Mr. Taylor) has been very vocal tonight. He is opposed to the charter of rights. He opposes everything.

Mr. Taylor: Speak for yourself.

Mr. Solly: He has a great deal to say tonight. The members of the Conservative Party have been tyrannizing the House of Commons. They have made it impossible for members to speak. They have acted in what I consider to be an anti-democratic fashion. Meanwhile, members of the public have been saying to Members of Parliament, and possibly to the hon. member opposite, "But how can you be against a charter of rights for Canadians? How can you be against a constitutional amendment proposal which is the only one that all of the provinces have ever agreed on?" To those questions the opposition have no answers for the Canadian people. For six months or five months they have had no answer to the Canadian people.

● (2110)

Mr. Taylor: Wouldn't listen to the premiers.

Mr. Stollery: They have proposed an amendment tonight which is no answer to the Canadian people, for that has been another characteristic of this debate: mindless opposition, without ever giving anyone a reason why they are opposing what they are opposing.

Mr. Taylor: That's better than being a sheep.

Mr. Stollery: They all agree in the committee that the charter of rights needed more strengthening. Then they opposed passing it.

Mr. Taylor: They are gaining progress.

Mr. Stollery: How can anybody understand that? What a ridiculous position. The official opposition apparently opposes the only amending formula that the provinces and the federal government ever agreed on, and proposes an amending formula on which even the provinces do not agree.

Mr. Taylor: Why didn't you patriate the Constitution, then?

Mr. Stollery: It simply does not make any sense.

Mr. Taylor: Because its a Liberal MP and Liberal premier in Quebec. That's why. Why didn't you patriate it, then?

Mr. Laniel: Your new friend!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please. The hon. member for Spadina (Mr. Stollery) has the floor.

Mr. Stollery: Mr. Speaker, I was in the Chamber on the day that the petty, melancholy corporal's guard of Conservative MPs applauded the first speech of the hon. member for Provencher. The hon. member for Provencher talked at length about rights of all Canadians and then proposed a formula ensuring that all Canadians will not have those rights.

Mr. Taylor: Baloney, baloney!

Mr. Stollery: Imagine, the irony; such an empty, frightened flat remedy from a Member of Parliament for Provencher, the constituency which twice acclaimed Louis Riel. The hon. member for Provencher said at the time that Confederation works. Well, the Quebec referendum apart, the problems of increasing western alienation apart, the fact that for ten years federal cabinet ministers have not been able to make decisions without meetings with their provincial colleagues—including the harvest of moss off New Brunswick which must be decided by a federal-provincial conference; the temperature at which Chinese barbecued meat must be sold in Toronto's Chinatown, which must be decided by a federal-provincial conference—apart from all of that, a situation has developed in this country where a majority of the premiers are prepared to state their position publicly that Canadians should not have the same rights across Canada, including the right to work in other provinces.

How can the hon. member for Provencher claim that the present rules of Confederation work? I can only presume that when that vote was taken during the snowstorm in Quebec City on March 10, 1865, in view of his attitude, the hon. member for Provencher would have been one of the 33 members who voted against Confederation.

I think that the Canadian public should know that after he delivered his speech here in the Chamber, explained it to us at length, the importance of the debate, the need for every Member of Parliament to be heard on the subject, the long term importance of this constitution for Canadians of the future, the hon. member for Provencher showed his interest in this tremendously important debate by going off to South Africa for three weeks. I believe the Canadian public—