

Constitution Amendment, 1987

Of course, someday the Government may try to invoke the peace, order and good government clause to argue that the environment is a matter of national concern, going back and relying on the *Canada Temperance* case and others. On the other hand, if one is able to argue, say, in the case of Quebec, that it is a distinct society and that the peace, order and good government clause should receive a restricted application of the kind given by Viscount Haldane, namely, national emergency, then one could easily see that a checkerboard would emerge in this country with respect to environmental control programs.

I would also draw to the attention of the Hon. Member for Laurier (Mr. Berger) the fact that national objectives are nowhere defined as being established by the Government of Canada. In fact, if one looks at the comments of Mr. Bourassa in the National Assembly—

[Translation]

It is quite obvious that in his heart he considers that national objectives will be established in consultation with the provinces.

• (1240)

[English]

One must ask, where are these national objectives to be established? Here in the House of Commons, or behind closed doors at a private First Ministers' Conference, or behind closed doors at Meech Lake? I would like spokespersons from the Province of Quebec to come forward and tell us how they interpret this particular provision. All we have are comments from Mr. Bourassa in Quebec. If we establish our national objectives through provincial meetings of First Ministers, we are stating that the national interest is the sum of separate individual provincial interests. That is not what Canada is all about.

[Translation]

Mr. Malépart: Mr. Speaker, I would like to know why the Hon. Member for Saint-Henri—Westmount (Mr. Johnston) is so afraid of the promotion of French in Quebec. Why is he so afraid? Are the provinces enemies of the federal Government? Are the provincial Premiers bad boys? Why is he so afraid of Quebec's distinctive character? I understand that Westmount is no different from Toronto. But Saint-Henri is different from Westmount and different from Toronto. Can the Hon. Member for Saint-Henri—Westmount explain his fear, his fury, and why, in 1982, he did not fight as strongly when Quebec did not support the Constitution?

Mr. Johnston: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if my honourable friend and colleague from Montreal—Sainte-Marie was here when I made my comments, because I did explain that we are very proud to have a Quebec in which French is promoted. We are involved in the process. As I said, our children go to French schools. They work in French. So, as I explained, we stayed in Quebec because of the French fact, not in spite of it.

On the contrary! So obviously he did not understand the comments I just made here. But when he asks why I am afraid of the provincial Premiers, I say that we must have a national vision. We are here to stand up for the national interest, not the separate individual provincial interests. The Premier of each province is supposed to look after the interests of his own province. Mr. Ghiz was not elected by the people of Alberta. Only one legislature is supposed to represent the national interest. Its members are elected from all across the country. It is this Parliament. It is up to us to represent the national interest, not the interests of the Province of Quebec in this House. We have been elected to defend the national interest, to promote the national interest. It is not the responsibility of provincial premiers to defend this interest. They cannot do it; they have no incentive to do so. And that is why we cannot leave the management of our country in the hands of 10 Premiers meeting privately behind closed doors with the Prime Minister of Canada. That is not what Canada is all about.

[English]

Mr. Albert Cooper (Peace River): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to participate in this debate. It is important that the first thing I do is to indicate that I spent my summer working as a member of the committee on the Meech Lake Accord, only to discover at the end of that process that my name was not included in the list of members of the committee.

Obviously, this caused me a great deal of concern. I had to go through each of the reasons that I could possibly think of why my name was not included. The first one may have been the fact that my name is difficult to spell, but I do not think that flies. Maybe I am just too shy, quiet, and withdrawn.

Ms. Jewett: No, that doesn't fly either.

Mr. Cooper: My colleagues in the House know that this is not likely to have been the reason. Then I thought that possibly it was some regional discrimination, but after a little homework I had no choice but to rule that out. Finally, I decided it must be discrimination of another type, and that is the fact that I am so short—maybe they just missed me in the line-up.

After checking all those reasons out, I came to the conclusion that it happened as a matter of an oversight. I spent my summer working on the Meech Lake Accord, this historical document, only to be completely forgotten by history. It was a tough time for me, nevertheless it was a time that I thoroughly enjoyed and found most fascinating.

I wish to begin my remarks by complimenting the Hon. Member for Cambridge (Mr. Speyer), the co-chairman of the committee, who did an excellent job. Together with his co-chairman, Senator Tremblay from the other House, those men conducted themselves in a fashion that they can be proud of, and certainly I was proud to be part of the group that worked with them.