

The Constitution

time in its history, had 25 per cent or more of the population; if you do not, then you are a second-class citizen.

I believe the hon. member for Rosedale (Mr. Crombie) mentioned yesterday, in the House, that if that amending formula had been in place now, Canada would never have had medicare.

Following the 1971 Victoria formula came the Vancouver formula. With the Vancouver formula, which many of us support now, we found that the federal government, along with support of seven provinces representing approximately 50 per cent of the population, could provide a constitutional amendment. This was initially agreed to by all provinces, but at the last moment, it failed to be consummated.

In 1976 we saw a Parti Québécois government elected. It stood for political independence and economic association. It really focused Canada on a referendum debate rather than a constitutional discussion. In 1980, thanks to a good deal of support from members opposite, we saw the results of the referendum in Quebec showing magnificent support for Canada. However, implicit in the result of this was a perceived need for federal renewal. Last year we saw an unfortunate turn of events, for the unrest that was seen in Quebec, has now been transferred to western Canada.

Now, in 1981, I stand here discussing this in the constitutional debate on the proposed constitution act of 1981, and I would like to comment on several parts of the process that have taken us to this point. Some of these matters are obvious, and I am sure they are repetitive to members opposite, but I think they are worthy of mention. The most important of these factors is that nation building, as we have it in Canada today, is a dynamic and evolutionary process that is changing and it has taken us, over a period of time in a number of ways, to the position where we are, and that process can be expected to continue.

Along with the evolution of our legal constitutional position, we have had a concurrent and similar evolution in many of our cultural and social attitudes. The attitudes of people have changed over a long period of time. Their morals have sometimes changed; the way that they conduct their personal and governmental affairs themselves has changed. Many changes have been dramatic, and have been brought on by conflicts both within and without our country.

These conflicts which started with the Plains of Abraham, continued and included the American Revolution, the war of 1812, the rebellion of 1837, the U.S. civil war, Boer War, World War I, World War II and the Korean war and then even to a conflict without arms in the Quebec referendum and the discussions that are going on out west today. All of these confrontations have resulted in changes, many of which have been happening at the time we found we had adapted changes in our legal position.

The third major point is that all of these factors have occurred today with the background of a federal co-operative consensus system, which I think is a key factor. What is important today is that we recognize the evolutionary nature

of the institutions and the cultures of this county, that we establish at once the proper process basis to deal with inevitable conflicts that will come as we continue to experience growth, that we relieve these areas of potential conflict by anticipating the needs and the aspirations of regions and integrate them through just and honest process, and that we recognize the strengths of regions as assets on which to build our future.

● (2050)

The hon. member for Hochelaga-Maisonneuve (Mr. Joyal) spoke this afternoon about Canada being a creation which is greater than the sum of its parts. There is no question about that at all. The question need not even be asked, but the fact that he identifies it and the way it is identified concerns me somewhat because it implies there is misunderstanding of the way Canada can be a strong whole. There seems to be an inherent difference in the way hon. members opposite view a strong Canada and the way hon. members on this side view a strong Canada.

If I can use a medical analogy, I think each part of us as human beings is an important and integral part of a whole human being and that the whole human being can be no stronger than each one of its parts. We can borrow strengths from each of our parts to make the whole survive, but that is a limited process. Indeed, as each one of our parts is strong, so too will the entire body be that much stronger. Above all, today I believe our efforts must be to establish a constitutional process which has the confidence of the people of Canada.

As he was making his initial presentation, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chrétien) implied that after 50 years we have nothing to show in Canada. There was an effort to make a correction, that what he really meant to say was it was only in constitutional reform. I was listening that day, and that is not the inference I took from hearing him. The implication was that we should do something now in haste because after 50 years we really have nothing to show for our efforts. This attitude has left him in the position where he says that in spite of not liking unilateral action and in spite of doing what he thinks people do not want done, he will go ahead with this process because he thinks it is important and because he thinks we have not done anything in 50 years. The irony is that while he has an understanding of the need for reform, I believe he has a misunderstanding of the type of action and process we need.

The error may be fatal. The people who will suffer are now led, through simplistic advertising, slogans and some brilliant political speeches, to believe that the problems will be resolved by the proposed constitution act of 1981. Perhaps, so far, the only casualties are federal-provincial relations among eight of the provinces and the federal government. So far the only casualties are the relationships between Canada and Great Britain. So far the only casualties are the relationships of trust between the government and two thirds of the people of Canada who do not believe the federal government should act in a unilateral fashion. This is all that has suffered so far.