

Dominion-Provincial Conference

sources to the federal government under a tax rental agreement. The provinces were able to operate on that basis, allowing the country to participate in the war. Our constitution is only as inflexible as the parties to it. It has been the attitude of the federal government over the past few years which has made the constitution appear inflexible and worse than it really is. What is lacking today is political consensus between the federal and provincial governments, and no amount of fine draftsmanship or high flown phrases will cure that problem.

I am opposed to entrenching civil rights in a written constitution because then we would have a transfer of policy roles from the legislative branch of our government to the judicial. I submit that our courts are not equipped for this role and in many instances the United States Supreme Court has demonstrated the weakness of this theory. Some countries seem to have shown a propensity to change their constitutions with regularity once the first step has been taken. Examples which come to mind quickly are Venezuela, Greece and France. These examples demonstrate, I think, evidence of national disintegration rather than virility.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, I would say the problems facing the nation today, irrespective of the efforts of the continuing constitutional conference, are and remain, inflation, housing, Indian affairs, agricultural marketing and regional economic disparity. No amount of constitutional manipulation will produce the political consensus necessary for the solution of these problems.

It is refreshing to hear the Prime Minister say there will be no more medicare programs. What I cannot understand is, if he recognizes this program to be a mistake, why he persists in perpetuating it.

In my opinion, if the federal government would put its own constitutional and fiscal houses in order, the pressures would be reduced. Then, real progress could be made in first determining how we want to amend our constitution and, secondly, in determining what changes are really necessary for the prosperity and happiness of our citizens.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière) Mr. Speaker, we are no longer Frenchmen from France, nor Englishmen from England. We are Canadians living in Canada, and we are proud to do so. Canada, as such, is 100 years old. But long before 1867, the territory now known as Canada was peopled by Frenchmen coming from France and, soon after, by Anglo-Saxons.

Slowly, a cultural and linguistic duality grew, committing the two founding peoples to a perpetual duality, unless one or the other disappeared. In this regard, it seems that the English element does not want to disappear, no more than the French element. The new Canadians, who left their country of origin to settle in Canada, must also be taken into account.

The duality of a country such as Canada manifests itself through the respect of the two elements, the French and the English.

After 100 years of confederation, Mr. Speaker, Canada must face the vital necessity, the moral obligation, of taking stock of itself, and finding its place in the modern world behind which we often trail.

From here on, we must shape Canada as we want it and not as it would be imposed upon us; not by starting everything from scratch, by rejecting the past, but in an essentially positive perspective, turned towards the future, towards progress.

The past no longer belongs to us and the present is fleeting. We must build the future of this country, of our fellow-citizens and our own, because the future and the economic progress of our fellow-citizens alone can gratify our needs and our hopes. Mr. Speaker, may I call it four o'clock?

An hon. Member: It is five o'clock.

Mr. Fortin: Mr. Speaker, may I point out that it is "four" o'clock?

[*English*]

At five o'clock the house adjourned, without question put, pursuant to standing order.