

evolved and it is even possible to change a man into a woman today. Consequently, we must forget our old concepts of civil law or common law and realize that society changes, that our judicial system changes, that our parliamentary system changes. And your presence in this chair, Mr. Speaker, is a good example of a changing world. I am going to tell you that I hope the Charter will be submitted regularly to a renewal process to adapt to Canadian reality and in that sense, I want to congratulate again the Hon. Member for his initiative and I hope that in a constitutional negotiation, when there is less pressure . . . You know, it is much easier to improve things, than to change or to disturb old habits. From the moment the precedent of a constitutional Charter is established, from the moment people or lawyers have learned to live with, from the moment judges have demonstrated to us their view of reasonableness . . . From then on, the Charter could be reopened without creating as much commotion as its inclusion as such stirred in this country. In that sense, I feel that now we can be very happy we patriated our Constitution, because now we can discuss it between us, between Canadians, according to our own system of values. We don't even have to go through a little exercise which proved somewhat difficult for all of us, that is to go to another country and beg for the rights we wanted for us, Canadians. In that sense, the fact that we have cut the umbilical cord with Great Britain allows us to discuss between us without having to get others' approval, and I hope that other motions of the kind put forward by the Hon. Member will be introduced in this House so that we can really improve the Charter and make sure it does meet the new values of Canadians. I do hope his colleagues will not speak too long because I want to give the House the opportunity to pass and refer this motion to the committee, for if the government is really serious about it they will let it go to committee. I am sure we will be able to make tremendous progress as a Parliament if we include this notion of property rights which is absolutely not disputed by no right across this country.

● (1730)

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan-Malahat-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to make a few remarks on the motion before us, and I would like to thank the Hon. Member for Kitchener (Mr. Reimer) for bringing forward this motion on a very important topic. As I listened to him I was reminded of Tennyson's poem about the northern farmer in the 19th century who, as he rode his horse, at every step heard the horse's foot sounding the word: "propuppy-propuppy-propuppy". That seems to be one of the constant themes of the Conservative Party: "propuppy-propuppy-propuppy".

Mr. Nickerson: It is. You have it right.

Mr. Manly: We have seen a number of things debated during Private Members' Hour. Capital punishment was one issue, and metric used to be an issue until the Government decided it was not going to turn the clock back, it would throw

Constitution Act, 1982

a sop to some of the Conservatives but basically would endorse what had been done. At any rate, we have the Conservatives continuing with this theme: "propuppy-propuppy-propuppy", as they trot along with their 19th century ideas.

I think it is very important to emphasize that this debate is not about the right to own property. We already have that right. It is a right that Canadians enjoy, a right that I enjoy and intend to continue enjoying. For that reason I hope I will be able to continue paying my taxes and my mortgage, and I intend to avoid violating any of the zoning regulations which impinge upon my property. However, I recognize, as I enjoy my property, that no right is absolute, and I think we have to look at this question in light of that fact.

New Democrats have a long and proud tradition of defending the right of ordinary Canadians to own their own homes, farms and small businesses. We recognize that this is the central part of the Canadian way of life, and we fought against threats to this kind of ownership. Today the fundamental threats to that right come from a number of sources, such as high unemployment. How many people in this House have seen people lose their houses, farms and businesses because of the economic system? If people do not have jobs, they lose their homes. Where we have usurious interest rates, banks foreclose on people's homes. What a painful experience it is, not only to lose your equity, but also, as in British Columbia where our housing prices have fallen so drastically, to be stuck with costs in addition to that. These people bought homes and put everything they had into them, made their payments, and when they lost their jobs and were unable to make the payments, they were stuck with a great bill to pay to the bank because of usurious interest rates. When land is treated as a speculative commodity, that in turn is a threat against the right to own property. We would like to see that right spread around so more Canadians enjoy that right. We do not want to see it restricted to the few who are able to get the necessary funds together to buy their homes. We want to see all Canadians have access to the enjoyment of property.

Many of us in this House come from countries such as England or Scotland which have a somewhat bitter history. People once thought they had a certain right to property, but then they found out, through the enclosures or the highland clearances, that someone else had the legal right. So what they had enjoyed as a common right was taken away from them by the lord or the clan chiefs who were able to establish in court some kind of right to the property. These people were then deprived of their property.

Mr. Taylor: We do not have feudalism here.

Mr. Manly: We have that history. You ask me about Canada. Just two weeks ago we celebrated, or commemorated perhaps, there is not too much to celebrate, the one hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Batoche. The Métis had tried to protect their land, land that they had developed themselves. But who had legal title to that land? They found out that the Government of Canada had granted legal title to the railways, and the Métis were driven off their land. I would like to ask