

The vision of the right hon. gentleman is of ten loosely affiliated states with varying rights and standards, constantly squabbling with each other while the Canadian government stands by, an impotent and irrelevant spectator.

**An hon. Member:** Irreverent?

**Mr. Regan:** Irreverent also. The vast majority of Canadians, including the Right Hon. John Diefenbaker, rejected the two nation theory of our country which would have given special status to one province with different powers from the others. What the Leader of the Opposition now offers, however, is much worse than that which the country rejected and which Mr. Diefenbaker rejected. What the Leader of the Opposition offers is a ten-nation theory which is based on the implementation of the Vancouver formula. The implementation of his theory would bring on a weakened national government, near world prices for energy, interprovincial trade barriers, something like provincial passports to establish your right to work in a particular province, different constitutional provisions in different provinces, and no common standards in health or pension provisions.

An hon. member opposite says "nonsense." I will tell him why it is not nonsense. It is not nonsense because his ten nation theory is one which would set our regions and our provinces drifting apart toward dubious independent futures, just as the ice packs of Lake Superior break up, drift apart and eventually disappear each spring.

The Leader of the Opposition talks of the present process of constitutional patriation as being divisive and he says that this has not been the Canadian way. I will deal with that particular inaccuracy in a moment, but let me first ask, what on earth could be more divisive than the Vancouver formula with which he adorns his position? That particular solution to finding a universally acceptable amending formula provides that, even if enough provinces were to approve a constitutional change, some provinces could opt out of it. More and more provinces could opt out of more provisions as various changes are made. Thus, if you look at the charter of rights, you could have aboriginal rights protected in some provinces but not in others. Discrimination based on sex may be outlawed in certain provinces but ignored in others. Citizens' rights against unfair arrest could be entrenched in one province and unfettered imprisonment for such things as debt could be in vogue in others. I cannot imagine anything better designed to pull our country apart.

● (1550)

The right hon. gentleman also found the existence of different points of view on how the Constitution should be patriated distasteful and surprising. He was concerned about dissension. He contrasted the present process to that followed in the development of medicare in Canada; he picked that particular example. He said that the cause was as important, but that in the case of medicare what he called the Canadian federal process was followed.

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His choice of an example of the federal process is apt, but if he thinks it serves his argument, his knowledge of even recent political history is faulty. Medicare is the crowning glory of our Canadian social system. It is the most striking example of the difference between the Canadian and American ways of life, but its birth was accompanied by anything but unanimity. If he thinks all the provinces were happy at its advent, I want to assure him that they were not. It was imposed by federal spending power when, as usual, the provinces were unable to agree, either among themselves or with the feds, on any medicare scheme.

Here are some of the comments of that era regarding the sort of federal process to which the hon. member referred. Premier Robarts said of medicare:

Medicare is a glowing example of a Machiavellian scheme that is in my humble opinion one of the greatest political frauds that has ever been perpetrated on the people of this country.

In this House a prominent Conservative of that time, Mr. Fulton, said the following concerning the medicare proposal:

—heavy handed and ruthless, financial blackmail . . . not co-operative federalism but . . . dictatorial federalism of the worst sort.

This was the certain type of "unanimity" which existed on medicare. I could quote the comments of four or five other premiers if time allowed, but I think what it comes back to is simply this: the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition has now been corrected on how medicare came about. I am sure he was corrected before I said these words, but medicare is not an exception. How it really came about is what the federal process in Canada is, as is the federal process elsewhere. Because as a government we have moved to end 50 years of deadlock on patriation, he contends that we have given up on the federal system. He argued that we should not have done that, that the federal system has not failed, that we should meet and listen to the premiers disagree among themselves for another 50 years or longer to achieve unanimity, in the same way as six premiers who opposed our proposition recently met in Montreal and could not even agree on an amending formula or on whether or not to go to England.

The Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition does not understand that it is not the federal system which has failed; it is unanimity which has failed. The right hon. gentleman held extremely high office for a very brief time indeed. It was the only time he has ever held an executive-administrative position. He never participated in a single federal-provincial first ministers' conference. He never solved an intergovernmental deadlock except by total surrender. I know it is a serious thing to charge a former prime minister with naivete, but I kindly and seriously suggest that he was not in office long enough to learn that the voice of faction is not hushed by the importance of the undertaking. His history was faulty on medicare. Perhaps he does not realize that all of Canada's important national achievements have been accomplished despite dissension, dissension at least as deep and bitter as anything we have seen in the current undertaking.

If one reviews the debate, the public speeches and the outcries at the time of the original confederation, one will