

there is a principle that has been agreed upon, although no legal text has been seen. There has not really been any explanation of the implications of that and what it really involves. One paper says it is just a form of municipal government. Another paper says it is another level of government, federal, provincial and aboriginal. Other papers say it is going to involve 400 or 500 self-contained aboriginal communities. Is the law of the land going to apply or is the law of the province going to apply? Are all people of Canada, be they aboriginal, English speaking, French speaking, going to be covered by the charter of rights? These are questions that, frankly, as far as I am concerned have not been given a positive definition. There is real confusion about it.

I am glad I have the opportunity under supply today to voice my thoughts and concerns and read a column that I think asks some very legitimate questions on this issue. Quite frankly, I am going to conclude with a suggestion that I do not think the Prime Minister will take, but I am certainly going to throw it out.

That is the purport of what I would like to say today. I believe we are getting into an area where I know the Minister Responsible for Constitutional Affairs has to put on a brave face. He has to be an optimist and he has to keep moving. We are getting into this interim period where we are not sure where we are moving. We also know we have passed referendum legislation, therefore, we may come back into the House on that. That itself has problems for an independent member and for all members. The referendum legislation limits the debate on the question, which presumably would be a package, to three days. In three days with members speaking 20 minutes and 10 minutes of questions, you can only get about 20 or 30 speakers at the most on that situation which will be the fundamental question affecting the future of the land, if it comes to that.

I am glad to have this opportunity to voice some thoughts in anticipation of what I gather the Constitution ministers are talking about and/or in part have perhaps agreed upon. I am concerned that in this halo of unity to try to bring it all together as we would all like and/or the constitutional fatigue and the open sesame of compromise, we may be creating a monster within a monster in some areas of potential agreement in principle, although none of us have seen the legal text.

Supply

In that light and in the time I have, I want to refer to a column that was printed in *The Montreal Gazette* today, June 16, by one Peter Blaikie, who as many of us know is more than just a Montreal lawyer, but was the former president of the Progressive Conservative Party, long before my friend from Cambridge was on the scene.

Mr. Sobeski: I was there then.

Mr. Nowlan: Were you there? I had the interesting challenge of running against Peter and getting bumped and I took my lumps. He is also president of Alliance Quebec. There is a person whom we know. We may not agree with everything he says, but he is not a fly-by-night person. As I say, I got my scar tissue from him. Everyone should go through a defeat every so often. It is great for humility, but you do not want to do it too often. This man is rather articulate. As I say, you are not going to agree with everything he says but it does confirm some of my fears.

• (1850)

I think it is good to get this in the public record, so I am going to do something I have never done before. I am going to read this column. This will most likely take about five minutes. I hope it takes less. I do not want to read it too quickly. It was in today's paper. It will have some things that some might not agree with but I will not comment on that. I just want to read the column and then conclude with some general remarks. This is titled, but of course he does not have anything to do with the title in the paper. As Madam Speaker knows, that may be some copy person in the editorial room. The article is entitled: "Questions, the headlong rush to 'get a deal' is dangerous" by Peter Blaikie, as follows:

"Notwithstanding the label, the current debate is not about renewed federalism. It is not about the "distinct society", except as a form of camouflage. It is not about language and culture.

At its most obvious level, the debate is about the extent to which the provincial power-grab, principally by Quebec, will succeed. At another level, it is about the extent to which powerful, skilful pressure groups will have their interests satisfied. More subtly, it is about the extent to which the Prime Minister will sacrifice the national interest to repay his political debt to Quebec's ultranationalists.

Three things are certain in the event that a "deal" is struck. First, there will be no benefits, in the long term, for the overwhelming majority of Canadians. Second, the issue of Quebec's future will not be resolved. Third, to the extent that power is transferred to Quebec, directly or by way of the "distinct society" clause, the future work of the separatists will be made easier.