

*The Address*

the Yukon or the Northwest Territories wish to become a province and Parliament consents, then it is a province.

Of what business is it to the provinces of Prince Edward Island, Saskatchewan, British Columbia and Ontario whether the Yukon is or is not a province? It is time we stopped treating them as if they were colonies.

Second, there is no provision in the Constitution that would prohibit an existing province from expanding its territory into the Northwest Territories or the Yukon. There is no provision that would stop that unless it was stopped by seven provinces representing 50 per cent of the people and the Parliament of Canada.

We suggest that the territories themselves should have a veto over the expansion of existing provinces within their boundaries. If British Columbia, Alberta or some other province decides unilaterally to expand north, the people in the territories should have the right to say no.

Third, it is imperative that the governments of the two territories be represented at constitutional meetings, at the constitutional table, and that they have a chance to participate and a voice in federal-provincial meetings. I am very pleased to see that in Nipawin, Saskatchewan, today and yesterday at the Western Premiers Conference, Mr. Penikett, the premier of the Yukon, and Mr. Patterson, the government leader from the Northwest Territories, were there as full participants along with the four western premiers. That is a step forward. It has become a conference not only of western premiers, but also of the two leaders from the Northwest Territories and the Yukon. Let us follow that example and apply it to all constitutional negotiations, to all federal and provincial negotiations, to all negotiations that affect the people of the two territories. If we do that we are then talking about a more democratic Canada.

These are some of the issues that we should address when discussing how to change our Constitution and how we, as Canadians, can make our country more democratic.

There is one other issue I wish to refer to regarding changes to the Constitution. That is whether we should have a free vote on constitutional matters in this chamber. We heard from dozens and dozens of Canadians right across this country who were asking the parties, at

the committee that looked at a process of amending the Constitution, for a free vote. Person after person said that if there was a free vote on the Constitution in this House, members of Parliament would be forced to represent more accurately their constituents on a constitutional matter. They would be held more accountable by their constituents on a constitutional matter.

I suggest for all constitutional amendments that come before this House, we have a free vote with a two-thirds amendment, which would force members of Parliament to be more accountable to and representative of their constituents. It would also force members of all political parties in this House, be it three or four or five political parties, to try to reach a consensus on constitutional matters, to make sure that a constitutional matter is above and beyond partisan politics and that we try to achieve a truly national consensus. If a two-thirds majority was required, in almost every Parliament in this country, with a few exceptions like 1984 where there was a large majority, the consent of a significant number of people in the opposition would be required.

A government could not come before this House and say: "Look, here is the proposition and we do not care what you say, we are going to have a committee and then we will ram it through the House." That is not good enough.

I believe that on constitutional matters which are not partisan matters in the traditional sense, there must be a free vote with a two-thirds majority.

• (1700)

I think that is the feeling of the members of the Liberal and Conservative parties who sit on the joint committee on amending the Constitution of Canada.

If we were to open up the process, make the process more democratic, make it more accessible to the people in this country, then I think we could bring this country together. We could unite this country around the values that all of us share.

Travelling the country makes one more of an optimist. People want to stay together. People want this country to unite and stand together. They are also looking for a new way and a new method of building a country, reaching a