

The Minister of Justice (Mr. Chrétien) is often blamed for not having held consultations. But I saw what happened last summer. After Quebecers had given their answer to the referendum held by the Parti Québécois, after Quebecers had said no, one of them, the same one who built Bombardier, the same man who built Canadair, stood up and said: "Let me deal with that, Pierre. I do not like the subject, I have never wanted to build a career around it but let me deal with it. I shall go and see the premiers, we shall see what they are made of." He went around and met the premiers and what answers did he get? Mr. Sterling Lyon, the Premier of Manitoba, came to Ottawa and said he did not want a charter of rights. In 1980, a charter of rights, ugh! There is no use for that, it is simply insulting the people. There is no need to protect the rights of the citizenry but the rights of the provinces should be written into the Constitution. Let us protect ourselves, but the citizenry needs no protection.

We have to understand what is happening. We want an answer from Alberta but we just had it. The best way to be a Canadian is to say to the Canadian people: You need oil? We will no longer sell you any because you are not paying us the right price.

I remember reading in history books that if eastern Canadians had reacted in the same manner in the past Canada would not be the strong country it is today, it would not have survived.

A fact remains, it is impossible to believe that the premiers meant business at the bargaining table. They did not. Their political strategy was quite simple, namely to attack the Canadian government, to debate the constitution issue in order to focus public attention away from the provincial opposition, to be on hot lines or appear before the TV cameras with representatives of the Government of Canada because when people have to vote they can only vote for them because their opponents are the provincial parties, never the Liberal Party of Canada. But in this great debate, the provincial parties have not had their say because such were the rules of the game. That is over now. We have now come to the bottom line. We are now creating the necessary conditions in which a change can be made.

Later, the provincial premiers will come and sit with the Prime Minister of Canada and will build a new country on behalf of all Canadians. And in this regard, I can assure you, my constituents, that my deepest thoughts are for you and most of my work here is directed toward safeguarding your interests. That is why I attended more than 15 sittings of the committee on the Constitution and why I want to watch closely what is happening, because whatever happens in Canada in the years to come, whatever changes are made to our Constitution, I can swear to you that nobody will ever fiddle with your basic rights, nobody will ever deprive you of what your fathers and ancestors have fought for, because the responsibility you have invested in me is precisely to protect

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those rights, and this is what I am doing along with my colleagues. On their behalf, I simply say to you that if we vote for this resolution, it is because our country's future is built on success, on change, and because we, as your representatives in Parliament, are ensuring that your interests and those of your children are protected.

In this regard I say to the government which is now involved: Go ahead! This country will be more beautiful because some honest and stouthearted men have worked on behalf of the anglophones, the francophones and the native people as well as of all the others who have built this country and helped to make it even more beautiful and more honest. I would ask my colleagues in the opposition to think more about their constituents instead of being concerned with an as yet undefined position for which their party is trying to drum up support.

● (1720)

[English]

Hon. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to rise on this occasion and take part in this debate. I know that Mr. Speaker will take it with appropriate good humour when I say I have been waiting this afternoon for some time. I must say that this has given me the opportunity to hear three very interesting speeches, two from my friends and colleagues on the government benches and one from a British Columbia friend and colleague, the hon. member for New Westminster-Coquitlam (Miss Jewett). I think hon. members will agree that in all the speeches there was a combination of thoughtfulness, passion and certainly a very great amount of conviction. I see some of my friends on the government side nodding in assent.

The hon. member who wins the prize for passion this afternoon, of course, is my friend the hon. member for Lac Saint-Jean (Mr. Gimaiel) who certainly left us in no doubt about what he thought on this subject. I am not sure whether my hon. friend dealt with some of the other matters of very great concern but he left me in no doubt about his feelings which are very sincerely held.

I may be forgiven if I point out that the speech of which he complains sounds suspiciously familiar, and I had a chance to look at it. It is similar to speeches made by the former member for Crowfoot who later, because it was politically advantageous to the Liberal Party, was brought into the bosom of the Liberal cabinet. I know that my good friend will not mind if I point that out. It may give him a chance to make another speech.

The speech of the hon. member for Mississauga North (Mr. Fisher) was restrained and concentrated on one aspect of the debate, the charter of rights, as did the speech of the hon. member for New Westminster. That is a legitimate subject in this debate but, while I think the charter of rights is very important, and I am sure hon. members will agree that with other hon. members I worked very hard to make it a better