

The Address

political games, or to put the operation of the country at a standstill with that.

It is easy to do. There are dozens of mechanisms proposed in documents that I saw when I was in the job of the hon. member, the minister of constitutional affairs. That is a package that is easy.

I am convinced and we on this side of the House are all convinced that not everybody will be happy. However, it will meet a lot of the preoccupations of the people of the north. It will meet the preoccupations of the first citizens of Canada, the native Canadians. It will meet the aspirations of the people of western Canada who feel very strongly about an elected Senate.

It is the same for the people of Atlantic Canada who feel that with the small number of people they have, it is not the way it should be. They will be happy with that.

Most of the conditions that were the traditional conditions of Quebec, plus the mobility that was in the Allaire report and the principle of the sharing of powers, should receive very large support from the people of Quebec.

We are proposing an amending formula, that is the Victoria formula, which was agreed upon in 1971. Unfortunately the Quebec government walked away from it for the wrong reasons, and it should now come back. The policy of this party since 1971 has been that we have always accepted that it was the best amending formula, giving a veto to the regions.

This country is made of four big regions, and we have to respect that reality. In contrast, the unanimity rule that the Prime Minister offered last year was no amending formula at all.

In 1931 that was the debate: Should we have an amending formula or not? At that time the Prime Minister and premier refused unanimity. This proposition came back last year. That made no sense because the people of Quebec feel that they are one of the four parts of Canada. It is a reality.

We should have a formula that in the long run foresees what Canada should be 100 years from now. I urge the government to look at the possibility of defining what is a region.

I am willing to offer a suggestion. It might be that Quebec should be the base. If one province 100 years from now is bigger than Quebec, it could be the fifth region. I do not know if it is a very good idea, but we have

to make sure that this country is more balanced than is seen today.

An amending formula like the one I proposed, the Victoria formula, will give a great sense of security to the people of my native province. For me, it will be the package that we will be proposing to Canadians.

I am sure that if it is done with good will, if everyone in Canada wants to resolve that problem and to accept some compromise—life is made of compromises—we could have a new Constitution within a year. That would be a real reconciliation because it would not be a reconciliation based on political motivation to win an election.

It would be a reconciliation to build a country that would be a great, independent and proud country with which to enter into the 21st century. That should be the goal of this government.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Chrétien: I am telling the Prime Minister that one thing which is very important is that the debate on the Constitution should not be a program to try to win an election. A government should be judged on its activity as a government. It should not play tricks or try to divide the people in an election.

There is a limit where we will not go as a party, because we believe that we need a country that works. This country needs a strong federal government. If there is to be a devolution of powers, we might as well separate right away.

We have to have principles and stand by those principles. We will help the government if it does the same thing. If the government starts to play politics, we can do politicking too. We will tell the Canadian people that we will not accept the dice being rolled a second time with the future of this country.

When we have resolved that, as quickly as possible, we will be able to deal with the economic problems of this nation. This is why we say we need to act quickly: there is nothing worse than political instability. One million dollars does not speak English or French but it walks very fast. Political stability is extremely important for investment and jobs.

What is needed today is for 1.5 million Canadians to get jobs, but this political instability is not helping. The Prime Minister must know a lot of stories of political instability causing problems in Quebec and elsewhere.