

I suspect it will be the Conservative Party that will ensure there is no vote and no resolution of this issue in the House.

The two previous speakers, the Member who moved the motion and the Member responding for the Government, tried to blame the New Democratic Party for the fact that this is not in the Constitution. The Member who spoke on behalf of the Government pointed out all the problems that might occur if this were in the Constitution. We have never had an official Conservative Government position on this. That is what is missing from this debate.

Members are probably quite sincere when they put forward motions and present their Private Members' Bills to this House of Commons, but they are part of the governing Party. I would like to know the official position of the federal Conservative Government. I have yet to hear it in this House of Commons. I have never heard it. It was not in the Throne Speech and it was never presented by a government back-bencher. Individuals have stood here and made a few political points and used the occasion to attack our Party.

I am the official spokesman for our caucus on the Constitution, including the issue of property rights, and I can speak with the authority that that position gives me. In the past I have introduced motions which say that we believe in property rights. I said that we can even accept the principle of property rights in the Constitution, but that we must do so only if we do it in a way that does not take away at the same time the rights of other Canadians. The motion is on the book. It was made as an amendment to a motion made by the Conservatives when they were in opposition. It is a motion which I as the official spokesman for our Party stand by at this time.

The Hon. Member for Okanagan-Similkameen (Mr. King), speaking on behalf of the Government, pointed out many of the same concerns that I have expressed, as have many other Canadians, about the inclusion of property rights in the Constitution. He said there are a number of women's groups which are concerned about the effect of property rights in the Constitution and what that would do for the hard won rights women have achieved over the last many years, especially as most women are not considered the owners of real property.

That is a very legitimate concern of women's groups and others in this country. Coming from a riding where there are many native groups, I find they are also worried about how property rights can affect their land claims and land entitlement. Those groups add their concern to the voice of women. Labour groups have expressed concerns about how the rights of workers will be affected versus those who own property.

When I spoke of this type of proposal on the previous occasion, I read from an article in the *Winnipeg Free Press* of July 1983. A representative of mortgage holders explained why he wanted property rights in the Constitution. He stated that because a mortgage is considered property, he would have more rights than a worker or others who may make claims on the assets of a company which had gone bankrupt. That is a legitimate concern. He was speaking for his industry and his special interest group. He said that, as a mortgage holder, someone who had lent money to a company, he had more

rights than did the workers who had given their labour. There is somebody from the other side explaining why they want property rights in the Constitution.

Environmental groups have spoken about their concerns and what kinds of laws can be passed in this land if property rights are in the Constitution. More important, Conservative provincial Governments right across this nation have said that they do not want property rights in the Constitution. It is not 30 New Democrats in the House of Commons who are preventing or have prevented in the past property rights from being in the Constitution. It is the Premier of Alberta and the Premiers of other Conservative Governments across this land.

Members do not have to take my word. They can check the word of various Conservative provincial spokesmen. As the mover of the motion is from Alberta, I will use the example of his own provincial Government. Mr. Horseman, the Minister of Inter-Governmental Affairs of that Province, said:

It is made clear that the Government of Alberta's position is that the Constitutional responsibility for property and civil rights is that of the provinces. It should properly remain there and not be entrenched in the Charter of Rights and thus become subject to any control by the federal Government.

I do not know Mr. Horseman personally. Perhaps the Hon. Member for Lethbridge-Foothills (Mr. Thacker) does. I presume they are friends and colleagues. I presume the Hon. Member was not calling his provincial colleague a socialist. I further presume it was that man's responsibility to speak for the Government of Alberta. The official position of that provincial Conservative Government is that it does not want it in the Constitution. Don't blame us, blame your colleagues. The Government of Alberta is not alone. I further quote Mr. Horseman:

After a brief survey of other provinces by the Province of Alberta, it was clear that there was very little support given by other provinces for inclusion of the subject of property rights in the Charter.

● (1640)

The time period in which they spoke was very similar to the present time period. Almost every one of those provincial Governments is led by a Conservative administration. Let us not play politics. Let us be honest with each other. Let us tell the truth about who is really opposing property rights as an entrenched part of our Constitution. If we could resolve the other concerns which I expressed, the concerns about the environment, the concerns about the provinces' ability to regulate the use of land within their jurisdictions; if we could make sure that we could protect the ability of provincial Governments to make sure that farm land is owned by residents of the provinces, by people who are actually working the farms; if we could protect the rights of women, and if we could prove that the right to property is not a right that is more equal than the rights of the workers, then there is nothing wrong with property rights being entrenched in the Constitution. However, if property rights will be put in the Constitution as rights which would make one group of Canadians more powerful and will give one group of Canadians more rights and more privileges than others, then it is a problem.