

*The Constitution*

The Liberal Party accuses the Progressive Conservative Party of being hypocritical when the PC Party says the charter is desired, that patriation is desired, that equalization and an amending formula are desired, but we will not support Liberal formulas. It is the Liberals who are being hypocritical. They will not include numerous rights in the charter, such as the fundamental right of access to information and property rights, because they say there is provincial opposition. Yet the Liberal formula is opposed outright by 80 per cent of the provinces. If the government is concerned about provincial support, it would withdraw the package completely or agree to the Conservative amendment of the hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Epp). It will not do so due to its ability to speak out of both sides of its mouth.

The Conservatives support the idea of a charter, as do the people of Peace River and, I believe, of western Canada. In fact, I believe the majority of the people of Canada support it. However, there is no support for this unilateral charter. The people want a charter of rights of and for the people, of and for natives, anglophones, francophones, ethnic minorities, women, men, children, the handicapped, property owners, even provincial governments.

This charter is inadequate. The people do not want this charter because there is no consensus and no agreement. If this government supports this package, federalism will be dead and unitarianism will live. We will have a unitary state with unitary attitudes, a unitary Constitution and a unitary amending formula. Although this formula has the facade of consensus, the referendum clause turns the amending formula into a unitary amending formula.

Canadians are asking themselves about the importance of an amending formula. It is the fundamental cornerstone of future development in our political structure, the foundation of the future path of national relations and will dictate our ability to accommodate change. In fact, it will dictate how we will be able to evolve, expand and exist together in harmony as a nation. It will dictate whether or not we will continue to thrive on consensus and co-operation, or if confrontation and division will become the order of the day.

● (1440)

The amending formula chosen, if the path of consensus is the desired one, must adhere to the following very simple principles. First, it must prove practical under close scrutiny. Second, there must be a consensus on the formula itself, because without consensus on the formula, consensus after will be difficult if not impossible. Third, it has to be fair to all parties.

Let us look at the formula we are discussing here today. That formula does not adhere to either condition. Under close scrutiny basic flaws can be seen. First, a permanent veto for Ontario and Quebec is illogical if the population of the west increases as the population of the east decreases. The premise for the reason that Ontario has this veto is the number of people in that province. If that is in fact the premise, then it must also be the premise that if the population is not retained

the veto must be lost, for the reason for granting this veto would no longer exist.

Since the 25 per cent veto formula is applicable to any province that has or had that percentage of the population, it is stacked against the western provinces and is in fact in favour of the central provinces.

The 1976 census showed that Quebec had 27.12 per cent of the population, and according to StatsCan Quebec will be down to between 24.6 and 23.2 per cent by the year 2001. At the same time, the population of western Canada is predicted to rise from 27.2 per cent in 1976 to 31.9 per cent by the year 2001. Thus we can see that the western provinces would be reduced to second-class citizens.

Third-class status would then be conferred upon provinces such as Saskatchewan and Manitoba. That very simply is because the western provinces can veto only if at least two of the provinces having at least 50 per cent of the population choose to do so. Manitoba and Saskatchewan together do not have 50 per cent of the population of western Canada, yet they represent 50 per cent of the western provinces. They are not equal, then, in status to Alberta and B.C., and the west as a whole is not equal in status to each of the central provinces.

The second condition I referred to was the degree of consensus the formula must meet, and again I suggest there is none. The government is implementing an amending formula that does not even meet the very conditions it dictates as the procedure for future amendments. It does not have the support of every province that has or had at least 25 per cent of the population. It does not have the support of at least two of the Atlantic provinces and it does not have the support of any of the western provinces. The Liberals and NDP are thereby giving this House and this nation a first-rate lesson in hypocrisy, because their own formula cannot even pass itself.

An alternative has been submitted by my party which meets these two fundamental conditions. This alternative, which was dismissed by the Liberals and the NDP, treats all Canadians as equals and treats the provinces as equals. It recognizes the larger provinces with the rule that at least 50 per cent of the population of Canada must support any proposed amendment. It also recognizes the eastern and western provinces as strong voices. It is also just in that there has been an amount of consensus with the provinces as to its use. Final arrangements would have to be worked out, but that is not impossible. A deal could be arranged which would be in keeping with the spirit of consensus and co-operation that is so important, and in keeping with the federalist nature of our country. No province would be relegated to second or third-class status. Negotiations between the federal and provincial governments, even though they are not automatically possible, are not impossible, and I believe strongly that with the proper attitude on both sides, attitudes that lend themselves to those two key words "co-operation" and "consensus", our efforts would bear some fruit.

Canadians have traditionally been able to operate within the framework of co-operation and consensus; why not now? In the past the provinces have sat down with the federal govern-