

because they dreamed of and cherished the thought of owning their own land. Our party supported the inclusion of an amendment indicating that everyone has the right to enjoyment of property. On this issue, Prince Edward Island has supported the federal government's position with good reason, but I want to make it perfectly clear that the government of Prince Edward Island is not against people owning and enjoying property. The main concern of Islanders is that property on Prince Edward Island belong to residents of Prince Edward Island.

Prince Edward Island is small and dependent on its land. We value our land highly, as it is the most important of our few natural resources. In the past we have encountered a variety of problems where ownership of our land has been concerned. For more than 100 years we have been vulnerable to massive instances of absentee landlordism. In 1767, parcels of land on Prince Edward Island, which was then St. John Island, were lotteried off and the scandalous system of tenure, which has so aptly been called absentee proprietorship or absentee landlordism, was foisted upon the young colony, destined to throttle the Island's progress for over 100 years and to colour the greater part of Island politics. Land proprietors neglected the terms under which they had received their lots, and none of the conditions by which grantees were to settle their tenants on their 20,000 acre lots within ten years had been adhered to. In 1797, 30 years later, 23 of the 67 lots were still completely empty of settlers, since the majority of the proprietors resided in Great Britain, some lands had already been pre-empted by squatters whose occupancy had no standing in law. Because proprietors had been permitted to escape their quit rent obligations, the island government had virtually no revenue for improvement projects. Isolation, tenantry, farming little above subsistence level, and absentee landlordism were the ingredients of real discontent. Tenant farmers struggled to extricate themselves from their peasant-like status and gain possession of the fields they ploughed, nourished and reaped. It was not until 1875, however, two years after Prince Edward Island joined Canada, that the tenants tribulation came to an end. The compulsory land purchase act was passed, and the productive red soil of Prince Edward Island passed into the ownership of those who tilled it.

Individuals and industries are free to come to the island, buy land and establish industries, but we do not want people from away buying our land and controlling it for mere speculation, nor do we want our prime agricultural land sold for purposes other than agriculture. The provincial government rightly feared that the proposed constitutional feature ensuring the freedom of property rights would prevent provinces from legislating in areas of property rights. Islanders were concerned whether they would have the right to ensure that their land was not held by people from out of the province who were not there to take advantage of it and to ensure that local people were not deprived of their property rights within their province. Prince Edward Island wants to be able to continue legislating its own property rights; it does not want provincial legislation on non-resident ownership of land rendered null and

void by a clause in a Canadian constitution, especially a constitution such as the one being proposed by the federal government.

The federal government is succeeding in provoking bitter divisions within the country. Its tactics are divisive. It is entrenching bitterness as opposed to rights. The consensus of Canadians to live together was founded on the principles of consent and political compromise. The great genius of Canadians has been our ability to reach the necessary bargains so that we can live together as one people.

Accordingly, our Constitution must embody a process which will continue to renew political consensus, notwithstanding dramatic social transformations and recurring economic and political crises. Unfortunately, the federal government's approach to this issue has widened the already dangerous divisions that exist in parts of Canada. This constitutional exercise should be an opportunity for all Canadians to renew themselves and their pride in their country, but instead it is dividing them. The fixation of the Prime Minister with patriation is causing more division and more tension. The Prime Minister's apparent haste in bringing the Constitution home to Canada on his terms is unnecessary and very damaging. What we are sending to Westminster is wide-ranging and fundamental constitutional change, not merely a minor change in administrative jurisdiction. It is not a matter that can be or should be dealt with hastily.

The present deliberation over the constitution will affect the framework of Canada for many years to come. The federal government's amendments are not acceptable to most Canadians. If the federal and provincial governments cannot agree immediately, then I can see nothing wrong in simply leaving the Constitution alone until agreement is reached. It has served us pretty well for 113 years and surely we need not rush into ill-considered changes. A twentieth century Constitution must provide the framework for a meaningful new national economic policy. It bears directly on Canada's future as one strong and united nation. An unwise decision could cause permanent regional alienation and dissent. It is a slow and laborious process, requiring perseverance and endurance; it cannot be hurried.

I would like to read a statement voiced some years ago by Senator Eugene Forsey which expressed the view that constitutional deliberations are of vital importance to this nation and cannot be dealt with in haste. He said:

The first basic fact we must get clear is that our existing Constitution is not a piece or old furniture, or an old top hat, or a Victorian system of plumbing. It is something which grew out of the needs of the pre-confederation colonies, which gave us life as a people, which has shaped our life as a people, which has adapted itself to our changing needs as a people. It has not remained what it was in 1867. It has grown, in some respects almost out of all recognition: a little by formal amendment; much by judicial interpretation; most of all, perhaps, by the development of new habits, new customs, new conventions, new administrative arrangements, especially inter-governmental arrangements. Perhaps it now needs further formal amendment. But let us never forget that, because a constitution is what it is, pervading and shaping the lives of every human being in the community, changing it by formal amendment is an immensely serious business. It is not like getting a new hair-do, or growing a beard, or buying new furniture or new clothes, or putting in a new bathroom. It is more like marriage—in the words of the Anglican prayer book, "not by any to be enterprised, nor taken in