

*The Address*

benefit of the West, natives, Quebecers, the North, the Atlantic provinces, Ontario and everybody.

• (1650)

I am optimistic that we will be able to find a way to save our great country and to protect at the same time its national solidarity and its real diversity, Mr. Speaker.

We are lucky to have two great languages, French and English, and the natives who were here before anybody else, and now a large number of people who came from many countries from all over the world.

After six or seven weeks of public hearings, I am convinced that most of our national population will wish to have a united and strong Canada.

[*English*]

In the process of changing our country, the most important thing is democracy, giving people a voice and allowing them to participate in every stage of the process.

I think we should look at some of our history. We have had a proud history in many ways in terms of what kind of a country we have built. We have medical care, hospitalization, health insurance, and family allowance. We have a mixed economy. We have a free and democratic country.

We have a wealthy country with many resources, but when it has come to changing our Constitution, we have often been deficient in living up to the great rhetoric and the great hope that we all hold for this country.

The oversight that is the most glaring to me is how we have shunted aside and forgotten the aboriginal people, the first people of this country.

When we look at how we change our Constitution, there is no reference whatsoever to aboriginal people. They do not have a voice at the table. Before we make changes to the Constitution with respect to the aboriginal people in this country, changes which affect them directly, whether treaty rights or self-government, I suggest that aboriginal people themselves should have a say.

They should be allowed the right of consent. In other words, we should not change treaty rights without their consent. We should not impose a system of self-government in this country. If there is self-government for aboriginal people, it should be with their consent. If we

deal with issues that affect them directly, it must be with their consent.

Second, no matter what the constitutional issue may be, the aboriginal people must be at the table. They must have a voice. They must participate or take part in those meetings, because aboriginal people in this country are affected by equality rights for men and women. They are affected by whether or not there are property rights in the Constitution, whether or not there is free speech. They are affected by our languages, our many cultures and our Canadian reality.

The time has come to make sure that they have voice and that they have a real role in consenting to changes in the Constitution that affect them.

The next thing is the role of our northern territories. When you travel the north, you find out very quickly that they are treated in many ways by people in this part of the world as though they are colonies. Things are imposed on them by the politicians in Ottawa and by the bureaucracy.

Many years ago in 1905 when my province became a province of this country it became a province through an agreement by the people in the then territory that Saskatchewan now is and the Parliament of Canada.

The people of Saskatchewan and the Parliament of Canada in a bilateral sense agreed that Saskatchewan should be a province. The same thing in Manitoba, British Columbia, Alberta, Prince Edward Island and, in 1949, Newfoundland and Labrador.

It was the people in the Dominion of Newfoundland and Labrador who had a referendum and later signed an agreement with Canada through the Parliament of Canada to become a province.

In 1982, when the Constitution was patriated and brought back to Canada with the charter of rights, Parliament changed the rules for the creation of new provinces.

Instead of it being a decision of the people of the Yukon and Northwest Territories, for example, and Parliament, a new province could be created only if there was the agreement of Parliament and seven provinces representing 50 per cent of the population of Canada. That is not fair. We are not applying the same rules in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon as we applied in the rest of the country. I suggest that we go back to the rules before 1982 for the creation of a new province. If