

Motion agreed to and report adopted.

● (1530)

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, when shall this bill be read the third time?

Senator Hastings moved that the bill be placed on the Orders of the Day for third reading at the next sitting of the Senate.

Motion agreed to.

THE CONSTITUTION

MOTION FOR AN ADDRESS TO HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN—
MOTION IN AMENDMENT—DEBATE CONTINUED

The Senate resumed from yesterday the debate on the motion of Senator Perrault that an Address be presented to Her Majesty the Queen respecting the Constitution of Canada, and on the motion in amendment thereto of Senator Yuzyk.

Hon. Edward M. Lawson: Honourable senators, I want to say at the outset that I appreciate Senator Flynn's intervention to allow me to speak. By way of reciprocation, I should like to say that I shall be very brief in my comments. I was starting to get a complex, first of all on account of the sunshine coming in, and secondly because of all the points of order that appear to disallow my right to speak. I was just going to ask, "Where is Senator Godfrey when I need him?"

Here are just a few passing remarks by someone from British Columbia on the Constitution and the proposed amendments.

I think the first thing I should mention, very briefly, is this. We hear all kinds of talk about western separation, as if it were some kind of orderly group that is ready to pack up and leave. As a British Columbian, I can tell you unequivocally that that is not in the minds of the overwhelming majority of British Columbians. There is a small handful in the west of, I think, misguided persons who feel that way, and have sincere beliefs about it, but it is certainly not in the minds of the people I talk to and associate with on a regular basis. I do not think you can even talk about western separation, because there are some very strong views in British Columbia that are significantly different from the views of Alberta. In particular, with regard to the concerns that are expressed by Premier Lougheed in his opposition to the federal government's energy policy, I am satisfied, from listening to the people I have talked to, that there are just as many British Columbians who are unhappy about Peter Lougheed's arbitrary act of cutting off oil to the east as there are easterners who are upset about it; because whatever we are in British Columbia, we are bright enough to understand that it costs us just as much, as individual British Columbians, to pay the extra prices that people are being subjected to here in the east as it does in any other part of the country; so there are just as many British Columbians who are angry at Peter Lougheed as there are Canadians anywhere else in Canada. As a matter of fact, many of the people I associate with in trade unions are asking, "If Peter Lougheed can get away with simply shutting off the rest of the

country and forcing us to spend millions and millions of dollars more, how come the trade unions haven't tried that?" This is a new idea, a novel idea, as to how to deal with problems and find solutions to them. They are looking at the situation very carefully, to see if he gets away with it, and then they feel that perhaps the unions should be more imaginative and try to get away with such actions themselves. We know that if they tried anything like that themselves, and they have certainly been involved in many disputes—

Senator Flynn: They have been doing pretty well.

Senator Lawson: Well, in the many disputes that they have been involved in, they have not been able to do that, and if they were to try something quite as drastic as that, then, without question, they would be before the courts or they would be legislated against; but it is something they are watching very carefully.

In British Columbia my friend, Premier Bennett, expresses his concerns about the Constitution, about the unfairness of it, and so on, and I do not quarrel with his right to try to use his bargaining leverage, which is something that I, and the people I associate with and know something about and represent, understand. But what troubles me most is Premier Bennett saying that one of the things he wants in particular is a House of the Provinces. "We must scrap the Senate and get it changed," he says. "We must have a House of the Provinces, because regional interests are not being properly represented in the Senate."

Senator Flynn: Occasionally they are.

Senator Lawson: I asked Premier Bennett, "When was the last time you called all the B.C. senators together, regardless of party, and said, 'This is the position of the Province of British Columbia. Can you support it in the Senate?'" Any of the B.C. senators will tell you that on no single occasion has Premier Bennett ever utilized the federal senators from his province to represent the geographical interests of British Columbia. What they do they do as individuals, on their own, based on their sincere belief that what they are doing is in the best interests of British Columbia.

I say to Premier Bennett, and to any other provincial premier who wants to talk about restructuring this body or changing it, "If you have not utilized the federal representatives in your area who are members of the Senate so that they can represent your provincial interests, you have forfeited your right to complain, and you have forfeited your right to tear down this place."

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Lawson: Out of the respect I have for Senator Flynn, I will not cover all the other provinces that I might ordinarily have covered. But I want to talk about the concerns that I hear being expressed more and more in talking to many ordinary working people across the country, both men and women. I ask them about their position with regard to the Constitution, patriation, the Charter of Rights, and so on, and it seems that before they respond to that they want to talk about, for example, house prices in Vancouver. They say,

"What about not being able to buy even a lot in a dormitory city like Burnaby, near Vancouver, for less than \$100,000? What about ordinary working people not being able to rent an apartment for less than \$1,000 or \$1,200 a month?" They want to know what we are going to do about those things.

"Where are your priorities?", they say to me. Because of this inflated, run-away market we have in British Columbia, in housing, with houses increasing in value at 100 per cent, 200 per cent, 300 per cent, a thousand per cent in a relatively short period of time, it seems that there are two beneficiaries: the mortgage companies and the land wheelers and dealers. The only other beneficiaries, it now appears, are going to be some of the maritime provinces.

There was a special feature in the media just last week indicating that many people are saying, "We invested in these older homes years ago. Now we find we can't afford to live in British Columbia, so we are going to sell these homes, take our money, buy a house at 20 or 25 per cent of the B.C. cost in the maritimes, and use the surplus to live on." There is therefore going to be a migration from west to east, which is going to turn the country upside down as a result of what is taking place. They say, "Perhaps it will be in the best long-range interests of the country if we do that."

Then they ask me, "What about interest rates, with regard to mortgages, that are running at 14, 15, 16, and on up to 20 per cent?" They say, "How can we do this? How do we buy a home? How do we pay for it?" We try to explain the need for this war on inflation that is being generalised by some of the leaders in the government, but they find great difficulty in understanding it all.

Then they read in the newspapers that the lowest increase in profits by the major chartered banks was obtained by the poor old Bank of Nova Scotia, that only got a 24 per cent increase over last year—I guess we are going to have to send CARE packages to them—the highest increase being in the case of the Royal, at something like 79 per cent. Ordinary Canadians are finding great difficulty in understanding how, on the one hand, we have these huge inflated interest rates, and high costs, and, on the other hand, these exorbitant, almost usurious profits being taken down by the banks.

They want to know about those kinds of concerns. They ask, "What about energy prices? What about inflation? What about unemployment in many areas across the country?" They are saying that they understand, to some degree, the concern about the Constitution, and the need for a Charter of Rights to protect equal rights for men and women, women's rights, aboriginal rights and language rights; but after all the discussions and meetings I have had with various people from various walks of life right across the country, and particularly in the west, they say, "Let us get on with this, let us get it done with, and let us then get to more important economic matters affecting the people and the country as a whole."

I have to ask myself: Would we be better off with the Constitution patriated? Would we be better off with it here, with a Charter of Rights included in it? Would we be better off with an amending formula? When I examine all of that, and the views that have been expressed, I come to the conclusion that, yes, we would be better off.

In concluding my brief remarks, however, let me say that what we need, in my view, is to have this whole matter concluded as rapidly as possible, having regard to all the rights of those involved. We should have the proposed resolution and the amendments adopted and referred to the Supreme Court, to have the matter tested, so that we do not have to go through a duplication of the whole action again, and then refer it to Westminster in order to bring it to Canada. Then let us get on with the very important concerns that have been expressed by the many ordinary Canadians I have talked to, who say that there are many important matters that need to be addressed.

● (1540)

Senator Austin: Honourable senators, I should simply like to direct one remark to Senator Lawson. I have to express some skepticism about the likelihood of many British Columbians moving to the Atlantic provinces, for the reasons that Senator Lawson gave, or, indeed, for any other reason. It would be very confusing for British Columbians to do so because in the Atlantic provinces, as Senator Lawson obviously knows, the ocean is on the wrong side.

Senator McElman: But the people are on the right side!

On motion of Senator Frith, debate adjourned.

The Senate adjourned until Tuesday, April 7, 1981, at 8 p.m.