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CHAIRMEN JOINT PARLIAMENT COMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTION
HOUSE OF COMMONS OTTAWA ONTARIO

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WHILE DELIBERATING ON THE NEW CONSTITUTION PLEASE CONSIDER OUR
HAPPINESS AND COMFORT ON BEING LOYAL CANADIAN CITIZENS AND AT THE
SAME TIME HAVING FULL FREEDOM TO ENJOY OUR SLOVENIAN CULTURAL
HERITAGE.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

SLOVENIAN CANADIAN ASSOCIATION

BOX 253

TELECOMMUNICATIONS
COMMUNICATIONS
COMMUNICATIONS

SUBMISSION
OF
ROD SYKES, LEADER
OF THE ALBERTA SOCIAL CREDIT PARTY,
ALBERTA'S OFFICIAL OPPOSITION
AND
RAY SPEAKER, M.L.A.
HOUSE LEADER

TO THE
SPECIAL JOINT CONSTITUTIONAL COMMITTEE
ON THE CONSTITUTION OF CANADA
AT OTTAWA

JANUARY 7, 1981

therefore, be appearing before it.

This action is tantamount to cutting off diplomatic relations, an action that might be expected from some new, emotionally erratic state rather than from a Canadian Province.

Mr. Lougheed has denied Albertans the benefit of a national forum at the highest level, and he has denied Canadians an accounting for his position and his policies before this forum. (He appears to prefer arranged interviews that he can stage-manage and dominate.)

The Alberta Social Credit Party is Alberta's Official Opposition. I am here today as Leader of that Party although since I am new to the position I have not yet had an opportunity to seek a seat in the Legislature. However, I am accompanied by Mr. Raymond Speaker, our House Leader and a former Cabinet Minister in the Social Credit Manning and Strom Governments.

We would have been accompanied by Mr. Al Romanchuk, our Party President who was, until he retired recently, the Mayor of Grande Prairie in the Peace River. Since this is Christmas Day, an important family and religious day for Ukrainian Canadians, Mr. Romanchuk regrets that he cannot join us.

The Social Credit position is that we respect our national parliamentary institutions and will work within the established parliamentary framework. We intend to put our case before the people of Canada in all appropriate ways. We have nothing to hide and we are prepared to expose our ideas to the people to

whom we are accountable. That is how democracy works, and that is the only way in which it can work.

We apologize, therefore, for the attitude taken by Premier Lougheed, an attitude that we consider uncomplimentary both to Parliament and to the people of this country.

We thank you for hearing us.

SOCIAL CREDIT

The Alberta Social Credit Party is, and always has been, an independent Provincial party whose aim has been to represent the interests of Albertans since its foundation nearly fifty years ago.

Alberta Social Credit has no association of a formal nature with any other political party -- although the party's support has often been sought by others. The Party has always supported policies on merit, and will continue to do so. This means that it does not believe that other parties are always wrong, nor that it is bound to oppose them in everything they do. On the contrary, Social Credit has always had the courage to support even those whose political interests are at variance with theirs, when a cause that is just or a principle that is right is at issue.

Throughout its' history Social Credit confused and confounded those who think in simple terms of black and white, and right and left. Social Credit has often been criticized by such people on the grounds that it is neither a pure Socialist Party (can such a thing be?) nor a pure Capitalist Party. It is possible to take the best of both worlds, and to apply successfully and

consistently policies that owe nothing to the dogma of either the extreme right or the extreme left. That is what Social Credit does, and does successfully.

Social Credit is the oldest of the independent Western political parties, and for 36 years without a break it provided Alberta with the finest government that any Province in Canada has ever had. It was progressive and innovative, and many of the policies and the institutions that we take for granted today were conceived and implemented for the first time by Social Credit.

The great electoral success of Social Credit over so many years, without parallel in Canadian history, led indirectly to defeat in 1971 when the Lougheed Conservatives were elected essentially on the claim that they would do everything that Social Credit did, but better because they were younger and more dynamic.

William Aberhart, Premier from 1935 to 1943, and Ernest C. Manning, Premier from 1943 to 1968 and now Senator, are men whose names rank large in Canadian history. They, with Premier Harry Strom (1968-1971) conceived and established the Alberta we know today, with all its prosperity and all its promise for the future.

(Lest it should seem that I am unfair to the Lougheed Conservatives, let me say that with one major exception they have minded the farm much as they said they would do in 1971 -- nothing very different. They are, however, in the fortunate position of having inherited the farm shortly before a bumper harvest occurred.

Of their management of the farm, our farm, about which we have some serious concerns, this is not the place to speak. The exception that I refer to is, of course, the war against Canada. It has always been Social Credit policy to negotiate differences patiently and quietly, so as to earn the respect of the parties -- and in that, over 36 years of Federal-Provincial negotiations, Social Credit never failed. The Lougheed Conservatives on the contrary have been at war -- the Premier's own word -- for nine years now without winning a single battle!)

Where does Social Credit stand in the political spectrum? I can only say that we seek, in Mr. Aberhart's words "Political liberty with economic security" and that is what the Social Credit government delivered for 36 years. That is what is threatened now in Alberta by the party in power. That is why Social Credit is needed now more than ever.

Our policies have been summed up in the words "Not right, not left, but straight ahead" and that seems to me to be fair. They are straight -- honest and clear so you know where we stand and what we stand for -- and progressive.

The word "social" refers to a strong commitment to help those who cannot help themselves, a commitment to social justice in a multicultural society, which I may describe as consisting of a majority of minorities. We have no dominant cultural group in terms of numbers, you see; and nearly six out of ten Albertans are from other than an English-speaking background.

The word "credit" means a great deal more than the ability to borrow. It includes reputation, character, confidence, and faith.

Our name means something, and what it means Social Credit lived up to for 36 years in government. What it means is what is needed for the future, too. Now more than ever -- to borrow one of the slogans of another Alberta party!

From the beginning, Social Credit stood for protection of our cultural heritage, and it was Mr. Aberhart who first spoke of a cultural heritage. It is a heritage that is not English, not French, one that has nothing in common with the historic rivalries and conflicts of the two cultures of central Canada: it is made up of the contributions of all those people who have come from all over the world in the past century, many of them with little more than hope and a dream, and that is truly a multicultural heritage. They came to a land where dreams come true -- Western Canada -- and they brought with them in addition to their culture a stubborn self-reliance, a determination to succeed and to keep what they had worked for and earned, and a strong respect for individual rights and individual achievements.

Mr. Aberhart spoke of a "just price" too. In his day Westerners did not always get the full benefit of market prices, world market prices, for what they produced. It seems that little has changed, although the problem then was agricultural produce and now it is oil and gas. In any case, it is a simple matter of human justice, and Social Credit stands as firmly now as ever in Alberta's history for a just price for everything the province produces; and a just price is simply what the rest of the world is willing to pay. It is not an artificial figure set by an anonymous bureaucracy two thousand miles away, any more now than it was in 1935.

Sharing comes through taxing, and taxes can be negotiated, and a Federal Government has taxing rights. That is not in dispute, and we are confident that negotiations in good faith can produce a settlement as they always did in the past -- but our right to a just price is not negotiable. Nor is ownership of our resources. That is a basic human right since the world began. ("The labourer is worthy of his hire".)

WESTERN CANADA: THE CULTURAL MOSAIC

Western Canada consists of Provinces that are part of a Confederation flexible enough in its original concept to accommodate a diversity of economic and cultural conditions across huge distances and in regions climatically very different. If it were not for the adaptability of this concept of Confederation, we would without doubt have become either separate countries or States of the Union to the south.

As it is, many people believe that there is an attempt to force Canadians into a rigid, unitary mould by changing the constitutional arrangements in another country, beyond our control and without opportunity for participation. It is this perception, as much as the economic conflicts which are conflicts of greed on both sides, that is responsible for the anger and the sense of outrage felt by many more Westerners than those actively considering separatism in any of its forms.

It seems necessary to describe the Western Canadian difference, since we do not teach Canadian history to any great extent, and what we do teach seems more concerned with other regions than with our own.

While the history of Central Canada is the history of the English and the French, the Protestants and the Catholics, and the conflicts between them, that history has absolutely no relevance to Western Canada. It is not our history, and ours does not in any significant respect resemble it. Our people are not the English and the French to any great degree, either, and the conflicts of Central Canada have no relevance whatever to the West.

After 1884, with the building of the railway, the colonization of the West was carried on energetically. Settlement was mainly British in origin up until then, but that changed steadily and rapidly thereafter. By 1900 nearly one-quarter of the population was of non-British origin and today in Calgary, or in Alberta for that matter, roughly six out of ten Albertans are not of English-speaking origin.

There has never been a very large French-Canadian population, although there have been missionaries and settlers from the earliest times, but there are a number of long-established French-speaking settlements in Alberta.

A rough idea of how our cultural mosaic was assembled, as a direct and an inevitable result of national settlement policy over many years, can be had from the following summary of some of the major cultural groups:

Germans	1885 on
Austrians	"
Jews	1880 on
Russian Mennonites	1892
Swedes	1880 on
Finns	"
Danes	"

Norwegians	1880 on
Icelanders	"
Hungarians	1886 (from 1898-1912 2.5 million came to Canada and the U.S.)
Americans	1900 on (one promoter settled 50,000 families, and they were the principal target of the Dominion Government and the largest single group for years)
Romanians	1885 on
French	1880 on
Doukhobors	1899 (7,500)
Ukrainians	1890 on
English	1888 on, various religious and philanthropic colonies
Chinese	1880 on
Lithuanians	
Poles	
Greeks	
Italians	
Belgians	
Dutch	
Japanese	

The newcomers came as a flood at the beginning of the new century, some with means but most with little more than hope. They came with a spirit of enterprise and confidence, prepared to work hard and to stand on their own feet. They were courageous, independent and self-reliant then, and now.

Western Canada is truly a multicultural society, and one that works. It is not a political idea that has to be encouraged and coddled lest it fade away. It is a fact, and it is alive and well because it is a natural result of building a country. These are the Canadians by choice, the Canadians who know what Canada stands

for, and they aren't going to have it taken away from them.

This Canada is not English and not French, and it has no time for the old squabbles of Central Canada. This is a Canada with a culture and an identity all its' own, owing nothing to the other, older Canada. We live and practice our multiculturalism as naturally as we live and breathe.

ALIENATION AND SEPARATISM

(Alienation: making unfriendly, hostile or indifferent where attachment formerly existed (Webster).)

There has been a great deal of talk about alienation, but a look at the definition makes it clear that whatever the attitude of the Prairies may be it is not alienation. It is not alienation for the simple reason that there has never, in all our history, been any attachment to, or affection for, the Central Canadian Establishment and the Central Government. Our history is one long struggle for recognition, for rights, for a fair share and for a fair price. That is the history of Western Canada.

In 1872 the Prime Minister, Sir John A. MacDonald, warned "Take care not to mix yourself up too much with this so-called Ontario party. They seem to think that the whole of the North West was made for that Province alone". (Personal papers)

Earlier, in 1869, the Report of the Palliser Expedition recommended that two Crown Colonies be established, one West of the mountains and the other East of the Rocky Mountains with headquarters at Red River, noting "the impossibility of governing a country at such a distance from the seat of government in Canada".

The old grievances were many, but most of them had their root in the problems of dealing with a government so far away that it literally knew nothing about the local problems, and understood less. The grievances were freight rates and grain handling inadequacies ninety years ago -- and they still are. They were fair prices for Western products -- and they still are. They were policies made in Central Canada for Central Canada -- and they still are.

It seems as if Central Canada has learned nothing in the last hundred years, while a whole new world, owing nothing to the old, has been building itself in Western Canada. This is not alienation, because nothing has been lost that ever existed.

Consider the "Fort McLeod Gazette" of 1883: "...there is a cry going up for justice from the Eastern boundary of Manitoba to the base of the Rocky Mountains and from the boundary line to Canada's Northern limit".

And the "Prince Albert Times" of September 1883: "Let not the Government mistake the patience and forbearance with which the people of these Territories have too long submitted to acknowledged wrongs and injustices, for acquiescence and submission. Even the trampled worm will turn at last, and they little understand the temper of our people if they imagine that the present state of things will be much longer endured".

Here the burning issues of the day were: Representation in Ottawa, provincial status, and control of natural resources.

There has been a separatist sentiment, a sentiment of independence, as long as Western Canada has existed, but it has rarely been so evident as now; and the West has never before been so strong economically, so clearly able to be self-sufficient. That is why, in these times, those who ridicule or sneer at the idea of separatism do so from ignorance. They do the country a great disservice, they create separatist sentiment, and they make the task of those who stand for unity that much the more difficult.

No thoughtful and prudent person who has the interests of Canada at heart can take separatism lightly. It is fully as serious as the Quebec brand and perhaps more so, because Quebec clearly had a great deal to lose financially by separation, whereas the West has a great deal to gain financially. Of that there can be little doubt.

It may be fair, therefore, to talk about Western anger, the Western sense of outrage, because that is what it is -- but alienation it is not.

The Alberta Social Credit Party stands solidly and unequivocally for Canadian unity. There is much more to a country than simply dollars and cents, and to consider the destruction of Canada would be to break faith with the Canadians-by-choice, those people who have come here from the four corners of the earth and left behind them everything familiar and dear, and invested their lives and their futures and those of their children in building a country better than any other.

But let me be clear: that country, the only Canada they know, is Western Canada and Western Canada is entirely different

from Central Canada in history, in culture, and in outlook. It is another world, and it fits into the Canadian Confederation because that Confederation can accommodate diversity within itself. If it is to be changed to fit some concept of what the country should be, rather than what it is, then it is only too likely that Western Canadians might be reluctant to be homogenized.

It is not good enough for Ottawa to say "trust us" because trust has to be earned by a settled course of conduct that inspires confidence over a period of time. The record does not justify trust, in the minds of many and perhaps most Western Canadians.

It is not good enough, either, for Ottawa to say "believe us" because credibility, too, has to be earned -- and, again, many think that the record is not good.

What is needed is a breathing-space, time away from radical change and pressure, and a return to the kind of government that is consistent and reasonable and accessible, the kind that can be trusted to behave predictably and fairly -- in short the kind of government that can be trusted.

I am sorry to say that throughout Western Canada the Government is, by and large, not believed and not trusted. That is why it has no elected representation in Western Canada. That is why, for ten years at least, the Liberal Party has not been a national party with a national mandate. It has no mandate for the constitutional initiative that it is taking now, for example.

INDIANS AND THE CONSTITUTION

Eleven treaties were entered into between the years 1871 to 1921, so far as Western Canada is concerned. These treaties involved the Crown, rather than the Provinces, and they were negotiated directly with the Indians.

It is clear that the status of the treaties is what I might call an extra-Provincial status; and that means that the Indian treaties must be dealt with apart from the Provinces but concurrently, for surely the circumstances confer on the Indians collectively something analogous to the status of a Province in the sense that they have the right to be consulted where changes are contemplated. It is true that the Indians may be without right of self-government, but it is only a matter of time until they become masters of their own destiny.

The treatment of Canadian Indians by the Government of Canada is nothing to be proud of: in fact, it is something to be ashamed of. It does not seem to us that we can speak in good faith of throwing off the bonds of colonial servitude, those bonds to Britain that hardly any of us knew we had until we were told about it by a solicitous Government, when we have been practicing in Canada a peculiarly vicious and destructive form of colonialism on our brothers of Indian descent.

So far as Social Credit is concerned, we do not presume to say what the rights of Indians under the treaties may be; but we say they clearly have rights, and those rights and those treaties must be dealt with concurrently with dealings with the Provinces. What is required is consultation and negotiation, just as for the Provinces.

Social Credit does not support the position of the Alberta Government, furthermore, that Indians are solely a Federal responsibility. We regard them as Albertans in every sense, fully entitled to equal treatment with other Albertans; and that is the approach that was taken by the Honorable Ray Speaker as Minister in the Strom Government more than ten years ago.

REVIVING A CORPSE: THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSAL OF 1980

In the 1949 election when Mr. St. Laurent became Prime Minister he and Mr. Pickersgill apparently thought that a high priority for the new Parliament should be removal of "the last legal vestiges of colonial status from the constitution of Canada".

In his election campaign Mr. St. Laurent had promised to consult the Provinces on a procedure for amending the constitution without reference to Westminster and to attempt to entrench or provide special constitutional guarantees for the language and educational clauses of the B.N.A. Act.

Despite his promise, however, and perhaps because of fear of failure in dealing with the Provinces, Mr. St. Laurent conceived a bold and original plan: he would bypass the Provinces and go directly to Westminster and, what is more, he would ask Westminster to make the constitutional changes that he wanted before transferring the domicile of the B.N.A. Act to Canada.

There were three changes to be made in England:

1. Special constitutional guarantees for the language and education sections of the Act.
2. Exclusive authority for Parliament to alter the constitution in all matters of exclusively Federal jurisdiction.
3. Authority for Parliament, with the consent of the Provinces, to change the other clauses of the Act.

After the changes had been made in England, the constitution was to be domiciled in Canada.

Mr. Pickersgill and other advisers convinced the Prime Minister that his scheme would not work, that it would cause more political trouble than it was worth, and that it would, in fact, create even worse problems than it was intended to remedy. He abandoned it before it saw the light of day.

It seems reasonable to suppose that the 1980 proposal to "patriate" the constitution has its' origin in the 1950 proposal abandoned by Prime Minister St. Laurent for good and sufficient reasons thirty years ago.

The proposal before us now is not new and not original: it is essentially the old one, raised from the dead, with some of the cosmetic attentions of a political embalmer applied to make the corpse look warmer.

There are differences, of course: in 1950 the Prime Minister had declared his intentions pretty clearly before he was elected; and in 1950, although he considered breaking faith with the Provinces, the Prime Minister decided to abandon his plan after considering the divisive and the destructive aspects of it.

PATRIATION: THE POSITION OF ALBERTA SOCIAL CREDIT

We take "patriation" (a non-word) to mean the proposal to transfer the B.N.A. Act to the jurisdiction of the Canadian Parliament, so that it is thereafter domiciled in Canada like any other Canadian legislation.

Alberta Social Credit supports that proposal. It will have no immediate effect on Canadians and, to that extent, it is a cosmetic action in itself. There is no great urgency, and it by no means occupies a high place among the problems with which Canada must deal, but it does represent a tidying-up, good housekeeping.

The Alberta Social Credit Party therefore endorses the request to Westminster that jurisdiction over the B.N.A. Act be transferred to Canada.

AMENDMENT: THE POSITION OF ALBERTA SOCIAL CREDIT

We understand that Westminster will be asked by the Government of Canada to amend the B.N.A. Act before it is domiciled in Canada. We understand, further, that the amendments sought are not agreed to by the Provinces and are such as to alter the respective powers of the Provinces and the Federal Government.

What is sought is not, therefore, the transfer to Canada of the existing constitutional legislation; but rather the creation of an entirely new and different piece of constitutional legislation on the skeleton of the old. It is presumably thought that the use of the existing legislation as a skeleton to be clothed

by the new legislative provisions somehow confers some legitimacy on the resulting legislation. This is, in our view, a most serious mistake.

Colonial intervention in Canadian affairs or the risk thereof seems to be cited as a major reason for the action being taken. We are not aware of any colonial, or other interference that has taken place within living memory; and we would like to know if there has been any that has somehow escaped our notice. In any case, it hardly seems reasonable, on the one hand to complain about interference, and on the other to ask the government about which you are complaining to interfere on a scale, and in affairs more controversial and more sensitive, than any that it has dealt with in this century, at least.

It is hardly appropriate, that is to say, to complain about colonial powers, to declare that you are acting to remove the last vestiges of the colonial relationship, and at the same time to ask the British Government to carry out an act of colonial intervention in the internal affairs of Canada, one last colonial act greater than any that ever preceded it -- and that at the most inappropriate time possible in our history!

There is a Yiddish word for such an approach: it is 'chutzpah' and it is defined as the state of mind, the degree of effrontery, that permits a man to murder his parents and then to claim the mercy of the Court because he is an orphan!

What Canada has apparently asked the British Government for is a favour, one last colonial act to end all colonial acts. "Do for Canada what you did for Ireland" is what we are saying -- give us a constitution made in England, one about which Canadians haven't been consulted, and then let us see how we get on!

The position of the Alberta Social Credit Party is that the settled and accepted Federal-Provincial procedures, hammered out over a hundred years of Federal-Provincial negotiations, must continue to prevail in the absence of any agreement in Canada by Canadians to change them. It is nonsense to say that agreement cannot be obtained in Canada, for it has been obtained before; and if it cannot be obtained now, it is possible that the Federal Government is wrong, or simply that it hasn't tried hard enough.

There is no crisis that requires the very nature of our country to be changed without our consideration and consent.

We say, therefore, that changes made in England cannot be acceptable in Canada; that any such changes, lacking political legitimacy, would never be acceptable to Canadians, and would be a permanent political sore creating conflict and division for years to come.

Our position, then, is that the constitution must be brought to Canada unchanged, so that Canadians may decide in Canada what to do about it. Only a constitution made in Canada can be acceptable to Canadians.