

Supply

To those who would sleep-walk us to separation by ignoring the constitutional crisis and focusing only on our economic problems, I say a strong economy and a strong Constitution go hand in hand. We cannot have a healthy Canada without a whole Canada, and that includes Quebec.

• (1250)

We cannot have a complete Canada unless we undergo a fundamental restructuring of the way we share power in this country.

Our system, designed in the 19th century, does not meet all the needs of the 21st century. Our present structures and institutions have not adapted to new realities.

Federalism is a complex system designed to deal with complex realities. When the situation changes, so must the specifics of our system. We need a new frame of thinking. We have to find a new constitutional deal for Canada. More than most countries, Canada is the creation of the strong will of our people. We were created in spite of geographic, linguistic and cultural differences in our proximity to a very powerful neighbour to the south.

The great majority of Canadians does not want to destroy Canada. It wants to rebuild it. The great majority of Quebecers wants to rejoin Canada in a new Confederation.

Quebecers are putting their ideas on the table in a very articulate and comprehensive manner. The rest of the country is slowly waking up to the scope of those possible changes. We may not like the specifics of some of the Allaire proposals. Then we must make counterproposals. Why not use this opportunity to take a look at other areas of dissatisfaction? To succeed, we must have a realistic focus on our objectives and design an effective and open process.

Unfortunately, the last constitutional round was handled by the Prime Minister like an amateur. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister has already begun the secretive process that failed us in the last constitutional round.

A member on the government side of the House accuses me of getting into the gutter. I have to tell him that I bled a lot and my party bled a lot over the last

number of years for the constitutional position I took because I believed it was right. I also believed then—and I continue to believe it—that had the Prime Minister listened to the Parliament of Canada and had the Prime Minister listened to the very process that allowed amendments to the constitutional process which did not derogate from any of the five conditions of Quebec, then we would have had a healthier, happier constitutional framework today and we would not have taken the country to the brink of separation.

An hon. member: Hear, hear.

Ms. Copps: Nothing is perfection in life and nothing is a seamless web. One of the things I have learned in politics is that by listening to those who feel without power and by including those people in the process, we can end up with a product, a constitution and a framework that are happier and healthier for all of us. Surely that is what the new constitutional round must be about.

I believe that is the intent of the NDP resolution, but let me refer to the NDP resolution as it stands.

[*Translation*]

The resolution as worded is confusing and, particularly, incomplete. Indeed, paragraph 7 provides for only one so-called precondition, namely “a desire to remain within a renewed Canadian federation”, the only condition for one Canada.

It makes no sense, Mr. Speaker, because Canada has to be more than a shell. Canada and the new federation will have to be anchored on more comprehensive and deeply-seated principles. We do not want an unconditional Canada if, as a country, it should fail to respond to the quest for equality, justice and the various forms of recognition that have been acknowledged for 124 years.

Mr. Speaker, this is why we intend to move a very significant amendment to the NDP motion. Jean Chrétien, the only leader of a federal party who had the courage to present a brief to the Bélanger-Campeau Commission, set forth the conditions for a real Canada—

Mr. Charest: Do not throw the door wide open, Sheila!

Ms. Copps: —a renewed Canada, and I quote: “A new Canada must accommodate the expression of new balances within the federation. The key to constitutional reform is the sharing of powers between both government levels. The objective sought must be a functional