

*The Constitution*

Perhaps the shabbiest episode in this catalogue of manipulation, evasion and half-truths which in those around the Prime Minister passes for government policy, was the put-up job—for it can be nothing else—on the British High Commissioner. So sorry and shabby and weak was this performance that even the Prime Minister has adopted a Pilate-like stance, washing his hands before the assembled media the other day in saying he had no complaints against the British High Commissioner. How does he justify the sickness of the episode in which that valuable and dedicated official's name was dragged through the mud to serve the political purpose of this government?

The government wanted to open a rift with England, they wanted to put pressure on Westminster. Think of it, Sir, this little group of time-serving wasters of our nation's patrimony putting pressure on the Mother of parliaments! That was their motive, their objective, and they have now had to back off. A member of the NDP, which is now recognized as the official annex of the Grit party, the little red rump as it has been referred to, or some sort of halfway house in this House, became involved. When the conversation with the British High Commissioner was reported, then the Grits went into action.

What was this conversation? In a reception on his own premises the British High Commissioner gave his opinion on the reaction of the British government and parliament to the constitutional package. He was doing his job, which was to put forward Britain's views. When the NDP ran back and tattled to their masters, the Grits did not for a moment hesitate to embarrass the British government and their representative here for their own purely political ends. That is what is sad, even tragic, about the whole sorry, shabby episode. A government in Canada was using an ambassador of another country as a whipping boy, and that is precisely what happened. It was a kind of diplomatic mugging engaged in by the Grits with their socialist accessories, the little red rump.

I say with regret, sir, that the position of the socialist members in this whole constitutional imbroglio has been one of slavishly following Trudeau's whistle.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker):** Order, please. I know that particularly with respect to the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) it is hardly necessary to draw his attention to that standing rule that we refer to each other by title and riding and not by name.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, of course, Mr. Speaker, when I used the term "Trudeau" I meant the Prime Minister.

When the Prime Minister needs them, he just blows his whistle, and like Pavlov's dog they come wagging their tail, automatically salivating as they travel. Even the attorney-general of Saskatchewan, Mr. Romanow, read them a lesson a few weeks ago on the folly of the position taken by the federal socialist party under its present leadership.

**An hon. Member:** A little red Tory.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Mr. Romanow is a little red Tory. Does the parliamentary secretary say that? I am sure he would be interested in learning of that opinion.

The hon. member for Oshawa (Mr. Broadbent) and his advisers have sadly misjudged the mood of Canadians if they think the Canadian people are going to sit still for an arbitrary invasion of the powers of the provinces, which is precisely what this is. The actions of the Grit government on the Constitution are more serious than that. They represent a massive power grab, a raid by the feds, a step back toward centralization in the destruction of the power of the provinces as operational entities in this country.

If the Grit majority in this House, along with the socialists, the puppet master and the puppets, can legislate in matters belonging constitutionally to the provinces using—and we know the term for it—the British parliament to impose constraints on the provinces which they are not prepared to accept, then, Sir, the provinces have been destroyed. They will cease to exist as viable structures. Anyone who examines the situation even briefly is compelled to come to that conclusion.

But that is not all. If the Prime Minister is balked in this mania of his, if Britain says "We do not have the mandate to do these things", then the Prime Minister issues threatening noises about what will happen. If the British say that they recognize the convention of consulting the provinces, and the indications are that they will, the consensus principle that prevailed in the Statute of Westminster of 1931, in unemployment insurance, old age pensions, the retirement of judges and other instances where amendments were made affecting the rights and prerogatives of the provinces, and if they say that they cannot seek to impose on the provinces of Canada in matters of their own jurisdiction principles originating at the federal level, then they are told by this government that they have no choice. I say, sir, that is simply not so.

I see that, despite the fact I have another 20 pages left in my carefully prepared speech, I have run out of time so perhaps I can deliver the other half at another time.

**Mr. W. Kenneth Robinson (Etobicoke-Lakeshore):** Mr. Speaker, I must say I am very pleased indeed to have the opportunity of making a few remarks with regard to this historic debate on the Constitution of our time. I congratulate all those members who have taken part in this debate ahead of me, because many of them have made signal steps in the direction in which we want to go in this nation.

It will be an historical moment when we bring the British North America Act to Canada with a charter of rights and an amending formula. We are in effect cutting the Gordian knot with the past but at the same time retaining our traditions and institutions that have served us so well over the years. After 114 years the time has come to patriate our Constitution. It is what we all want, it is what the United Kingdom wants as well, and it is the last vestige of colonialism.