

The Constitution

today, let me repeat Lord Acton's words: "The maturity of a society is measured by the maturity with which this society treats its minorities."

Despite our differences and seemingly endless debate in certain areas of disagreement, I remain convinced that there is and has always been infinitely more to unite than to divide us. Our future, our potential in people and resources, sometimes staggers the imagination. It is all there. What we are striving for now is some sort of common denominator which can bring it all together for the common good.

Let us get started. Let us get to work.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): A very good speech. A very useful contribution.

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, I should like to begin by congratulating the previous speaker, the hon. member for Dollard (Mr. Desmarais), on his remarks. He expressed in his speech considerable wisdom and the strength of feeling was evident to us all.

My congratulations, however, centre on the fact that he followed a spurious point of order interjected by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Lalonde) which bothered me a great deal. The minister said to the House that the 147 members who represent the Liberal party would be restricted to 20-minute speeches on an issue that is so important. I congratulate the hon. member for Dollard for taking almost the full 40 minutes to which his constituents are entitled. I think he used the time well to express a point of view which I cannot share in most respects, but which I can honour. I hope future speakers from the other side will take their responsibility to their constituents and to this Parliament seriously and take the time they need to bring to the floor of this House the message that they think they have to give. I hope they will not be muzzled by the wishes of cabinet ministers or the House leader.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Well said.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak as a Canadian from Alberta. I rise as a citizen within this federation, someone who values my freedom, my right to vote for a school board, a municipal or county government, a provincial legislature or this federal House of Commons.

In my province exactly 100 people are elected to serve in the legislature and the House of Commons, 79 in our provincial government and 21 in this House. I rise to report that 99 of those 100 people who represent the people of our province in a free, democratic way are totally and unalterably opposed to the present process and to the consequences of that process.

The hon. member for Dollard talked about national unity and the need for some changes relative to the people who live in the province of Quebec. In my brief intervention before this House today I will talk about the threat to national unity

which this proposed constitutional amendment carries with it in my province and in my riding. That threat is real and it must be attended; it must be given consideration before it is too late.

Last night I attended Baltic night, an event which occurs once a year on Parliament Hill. The thrust of Baltic night and the message which is delivered to parliamentarians by the Baltic people centres exclusively on the need for vigilance, on the protection of our freedom. That is the message from Baltic night and it is particularly appropriate that I have the opportunity to speak on the Constitution of Canada the day after attending Baltic night. I had the opportunity to listen to the refugees from unitary, totalitarian states warn us about the dangers to freedom and to see that concern is passed through generations to the young people who belong to the Baltic states.

● (1720)

I rise in this House today to clarify a couple of matters. First, I attended 50 of the 56 sitting days of the committee which met on the Constitution of Canada and for a whole year prior to that I spent at least as many hours outside of that committee trying to comprehend the nature of constitutions and the impact which they might have on a nation such as Canada. Through that kind of diligence I think one deserves the opportunity to speak in this House.

Second, this debate, in its initial short time in this House, in the Constitution committee itself and now at this phase, has demonstrated a great deal of difference between the members opposite and the members who serve in the official opposition. I believe the difference relates to the fact that members of the Liberal Party will give speech after speech centring on goals. On this side of the House we have no quarrel with the goals, but whether I appear on television with ministers of the Crown, in committee with Liberal members or whether I listen to speeches in the House of Commons, I think it is curious that members opposite seldom deal with the fine print. They seldom deal with the reality of what is written in this resolution. They seldom deal with the nature of Canada and the way we are governed; nor do they deal with the intrusion this particular legislation will make into our lives.

I think of this resolution we are debating today as a secret revolution. That it is a revolution, I have no doubt; and I will expound on that later. The fact that this is being done with a measure of secrecy, though not total secrecy, I also have no doubt; and I shall expound on that also. The revolution occurs in two ways. One way has been talked about a little, but the other way is seldom talked about. The revolution in the way we will be governed in the future will hit anyone who gives this measure serious study. It is a revolution related to the power of the people and to the supremacy of the voters of this country. This resolution will take away those powers from the people. That in itself is a revolutionary concept in its magnitude and repercussions.

It is also a revolution in both its process and its substance which attempts to dismantle the federal system. I wish to deal