

*The Constitution*

We are gagged by a Liberal majority which, if it does not stay there, walks out when something happens that does not please it. This amendment ensures that there will be carried into practice the very thing that the government is asking us to enshrine in its bill of rights in this constitution amendment, namely, the voice of the minority.

That is what this amendment is asking the government to do. They can adopt the course of trying to stonewall it by procedural argument—asking the Chair to rule it out of order on procedural grounds, but if they did the right thing and were not afraid of the minority voice they would allow it to be heard when that report comes back to the House.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The Chair has heard the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) three times on the point of order. One aspect, however, has not been touched on by anyone who has spoken to date and that is the references to the practices of either House. The Chair has some concern about a resolution of this House apparently giving an instruction concerning the practices of the other place. That is a matter which, I am sure, the Chair will take under advisement.

As I indicated earlier, at this stage the Chair would like to reserve judgment. The Chair will recognize the hon. member for Portage-Marquette (Mr. Mayer).

**Mr. Mayer:** Mr. Speaker, I have a very brief observation to make. It seems to me that in the democratic system that is embodied in this chamber, one of the most difficult and most delicate things a democratic system has to deal with is the treatment of minorities once the majority has assumed power. If we, by definition are the minority in this House—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The Chair has asked hon. members to defer comment on the point of order unless they have something fundamental to contribute. The Chair would like to recognize speakers in the general debate with the concurrence of the House. This was the suggestion made by hon. members, including the mover of the amendment. With the concurrence of the House the Chair would like to proceed in this way.

Are there other hon. members who wish to speak on the motion before the House?

**Mr. Fred McCain (Carleton-Charlotte):** Mr. Speaker, like the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen)—

**An hon. Member:** Three in a row.

**An hon. Member:** Filibuster!

**An hon. Member:** Why don't you people on the government side speak?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for Carleton-Charlotte has the floor.

**Mr. McCain:** Mr. Speaker, if we on this side of the House had not seen a member detained or discouraged from rising to

speak on this subject, I would not have the pleasure of being on my feet now.

I submit to you, as I think will become evident from many of the speeches in this debate, that those who are so avidly following the course of self-destruction of this nation proposed by this government have rightly and properly shown by their interjections—as they have just now—that perhaps there was some excuse after all for the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) when, in a petulant mood, he stated that backbenchers are nobodies. If they want to prove that they are somebodies, this would be a great time to do it.

As has been pointed out by my colleagues on many occasions, this is indeed an historic debate and one in which, in a way, I find no great pleasure in participating. I think it implies that we either recognize the concept on which this nation was founded or we may be laying the foundation of its destruction. This is a debate on a resolution that has the potential to alter the face of this country like no other before it. I believe that if this resolution is accepted in its present form it will change the shape of federalism as it has existed historically and that it may not be accepted as a favourable change.

I think it would be valuable to spend some time examining the force of federalism over the last century, because if this is to be called an historic debate, then, I say, history should play a part in the determination of its climax. The precedents set by the wise men of the past, and the examination of those precedents, should not be overlooked yet I submit that this motion could not have been presented had those precedents been given consideration by the government.

The good of the proposed nation as a whole was the primary objective of those who gave this nation their earliest consideration. Although these men had differences, they put those differences behind them and proposed a union that would be mutually beneficial to all parties concerned. This sense of co-operation can perhaps be best summed up in a report carried in the *Saint John Morning Telegraph* on September 9, 1864, which read as follows:

The leading argument advanced by the Canadian delegation may be expressed in a few words—there are three elements requisite to national prosperity—territory, population and commerce. We have the first two... we want... your commercial advantage. We have territory, we have population—we offer them to you. We ask in return an outlet to the ocean—your maritime facilities. Two of the essentials in a country's prosperity are ours, one is yours. Isolated and apart our progress must only be slow at best. United and combined we have all the elements within ourselves of commercial, social and political progress.

What could be more applicable to Canada than that latter statement, Mr. Speaker? There was a deep understanding of the spirit of co-operation. I repeat the words "isolated and apart our progress must only be slow at best." Together we have all the elements of progress. Continuance of isolation in those days, that is, preservation of regional jealousies and unwillingness to compromise, would have meant that Canada as we know it today would never have existed. Jose Howe, a chief opponent of Confederation realized the need for agreement and a sense of fair play when he said:

If an honest, practicable scheme of union can be arranged, let it be printed—and when it has been aired in all the provinces... They will sincerely support the