

To conclude on that point, Mr. Speaker, I will tell you I think we must put things in perspective and recognize that Canada is overall a country which has been successful.

• (1540)

Again, Mr. Speaker, I say this in confidence, because if we mention it in certain parts of the country, people are going to say that it does not make any sense. Between you and me, Mr. Speaker, when we consider all the human suffering in the world, when we think about it, I believe we can reasonably say that our country has worked well.

The problems we are presently experiencing are not caused by a constitutional arrangement; it is not the Constitution which determines and regulates peoples' lives and attitudes. The Constitution reflects what we are and what we want to be. And if we are presently experiencing problems in Canada, it is probably because certain governments have taken steps which have caused these problems. But they have not taken these steps, and at times spent too much money, because the Constitution forced them to do it. That is false.

We must recognize the facts for what they are, except that we are faced with an important basic problem. Do you know what it is, Mr. Speaker? The problem is that we have a constitution with which people do not identify, a constitution which is 123 years old. It is a constitution which does not reflect what we truly are. Since a constitution should be a mirror of the people, we should be able to identify with it. A constitution, Mr. Speaker, is made of mythology, of a certain amount of myths.

When people realize that their national institutions, whether the Senate, the Supreme Court or the Federal Parliament do not reflect what they are, they distanced themselves from them. Our Constitution does not sufficiently reflect what we are and want to be. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, do you know what was so great about Meech? It was that by recognizing Quebec as a distinct society, Quebecers could feel that they belonged both to Quebec and Canada. Perhaps for the first time in our history, we had managed to come to terms with our own ambivalence as Quebecers and Canadians. That is the reason Meech was so great.

Supply

Now, the real challenge ahead of us will be to find a way to change the Constitution. Yet, in closing I should like to make one point, Mr. Speaker. There are some in this debate who claimed that no change can be made without adherence to the major principles of a certain federalism or system of government. Some politicians with this argument, have managed to attract a great many Canadian men and women to their cause. I will not name them, but I am referring to Clyde Wells. As you will no doubt remember, he said then and repeated it again today and last weekend that we must abide by some basic principles.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you this: A constitution which represents, respects and reflects the basic principles of federalism to a greater extent than the reality of its country is a constitution with serious problems. But that is a starting point, Mr. Speaker. It is not true to say that people create institutions to their image and that people should try to fit as best they can within federalism. The opposite is true, Mr. Speaker. When people build a constitution, they must make sure that it resembles and reflects what they are, and I conclude on this, they adjust the principles of federalism or republicanism to this great mirror.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, I will tell you that Canadians are not the servants of some constitutional principle, but that the Constitution should be the servant of the Canadian people.

[*English*]

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised at the remarks of the hon. member for Sherbrooke, because the hon. member was chairman of the special committee appointed late in the day during the Meech process and that committee was appointed in an attempt to break the log-jam existing at that time.

I firmly believe that if that committee had been appointed at an earlier date, let us say in February or January, and if the same report had come out of the committee that was produced, the Meech accord might have been saved.

The hon. member knows because he sat day after day on that committee listening to many groups, including aboriginal groups, women's groups, language minority groups and multicultural groups, and they told him—and