

The Constitution

• (1950)

To that quotation I can only add "Amen".

Speaking personally, one aspect of the constitutional discussions I find especially distressing is the me, me, me attitude of many of the groups and organizations that are demanding special deals to serve their own particular interests. While these interests may be legitimate and stem from long-standing grievances, Canadians would be more impressed if their spokespersons displayed a greater desire to serve the common good in preserving our country as a national entity.

On the other hand, it is encouraging that the number appears to be dwindling of those who would welcome Quebec's departure from Confederation, despite the open and covert encouragement this idea receives from certain political groups. Some of these groups are active in my own part of Ontario. These elements suddenly imply that without Quebec the rest of Canada would be one big happy family.

This ignores the fact of Canadian history. Western political protest movements usually stem from a resentment of central domination, and central in such cases translates into Ontario, not Quebec. Without Quebec as part of Canada that resentment would only worsen. We would then have a country in which one province, Ontario, possessed half the population and a major share of the economic power and political clout. How long do you suppose other provinces would tolerate a situation like that?

The people who espouse these arguments offer a dangerously, if not sinisterly, simplistic view of Canada; one that could only lead to further fragmentation and the eventual total elimination of this country that we love.

The people I represent in Durham constituency are proud Canadians. Quebec has always been a part of their country and they want it to remain so. They want the issues before us to be resolved in a way that will make the continuing presence of Quebec possible for now and for all time.

We need a firmly united Canada with a strong central government capable of maintaining the national standards and programs that we cherish, a government which speaks with one voice internationally for the people from all regions and vast territories of this country, and one which will do so for at least another 125 years.

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, over the past couple of weeks I have had the opportunity to attend a number of community meetings which I held in my riding of Okanagan—Shuswap on the issue of the constitutional debate and the future of Canada.

I found these meetings to be particularly inspiring. It was really encouraging to see the turn out, even on a meeting held in Sicamous on a Friday night. Many people came to listen to the issues, debate the various aspects of the proposals and to lend their opinions to the discussions.

I held four meetings over the past little while: one in Falkland, one in Celista, one in Blind Bay and, as I said, one in the town of Sicamous. I am hoping to follow these up with meetings in other communities throughout the riding, as time permits, in Enderby, Armstrong and Cherryville, and hopefully two summary meetings later on in March in Vernon and Salmon Arm.

I want to say that the feeling I have from the meetings and from the discussions that took place was certainly a feeling that seems to have demonstrated or manifested itself in the national polls. There is no question that people throughout the Okanagan—Shuswap, as have all Canadians, have shown an increasing restlessness about the constitutional debate. They have grown weary with what they perceive as being Ottawa's constitutional obsession. They want to move on with their lives, they want to get on with the job at hand, and they want this dilemma, this crisis that we seem to be forever facing, to be resolved one way or the other.

They also want the government to turn its attention to what they see as the most pressing issue nationally, and that is the worsening economy. They want the government to involve ordinary people in the process of governing. In essence, people are seeking a process of empowerment, of change, in this parliamentary and democratic process. There has been a call—certainly it was registered in the meetings I was at—for a more effective Parliament, a more responsible and effective Senate, a more direct voice in the affairs of this nation.

I guess, in short, you could summarize it by saying that people in the Okanagan—Shuswap, and I would suggest most Canadians, have lost faith in the *status quo*, have lost faith not only in this government but perhaps even in the process of government itself.