

*The Constitution*

thirds of Canadians in opposition to it. It is rejected by a total region, that region wherein there are no elected representatives in this government, the western region. It is met with apprehension and deep concern. There is concern about the federal structure being under attack, concern about resources, concern about a possibly unitary state, concern about property ownership and a concern that the traditions and roots on which this country was built are being subverted or ignored.

Yes, this measure, in my view, does violate the spirit of federalism and the integrity of the provincial domain. What is most sad is that, in the process, our nation, instead of being drawn together, is being driven apart.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and his Liberal caucus, together with what is left of his left-wing rump, may very well, in crass political terms, win this issue. They will ram it through, and legally they may even win. However, will Canada and Canadians be winners in the process? It will be some victory when you consider that, in addition to the provinces and growing numbers of Canadians, as the parliamentary secretary pointed out, all political parties in Quebec are opposed. The New Democratic Parties in the provinces of Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Alberta and Quebec have publicly spoken against the action.

We have a number of senators in the other place who are speaking out, including Jean Paul Deschatelets, Andrew Thompson, Eric Cook, and John Godfrey of Ontario who said he would hold his nose and vote for the package, notwithstanding the fact he has some very serious reservations. Maxwell Cohen, one of the Liberal government's expert witnesses before the committee, opposes the constitutional proposal. Gordon Robertson also is in opposition, and I could go on and on. This would be some victory.

One wonders, with a victory of this nature, how Canadians would respond in the final analysis to this constitutional package. Will there be a positive attitude? Will they feel comfortable with it? Will they feel a part of it, or will it perpetuate further bitterness and distrust? Attitude, in my view, is one of the most important elements that cannot be defined in words or in law. There must be a genuine sense that this law, which is not an ordinary one, will be respected and upheld voluntarily in spirit and, indeed, in fact. That can only happen if there is an attitude on the part of Canadians that this Constitution is a real, living, dynamic reflection of the Canadian way of life as interpreted through the individual eyes of Canadians.

There must be a sense of attachment, a sense of fulfilment and a sense of communion. There must be the assurance that one can preserve ones individuality within the oneness of a nation.

There are a number of other elements which are part and parcel of this resolution which are not defined in words. There must be trust, and trust must be fostered by actions, and by words. In order for unity to prevail, there must be trust and respect for the truth.

● (2020)

No community can survive, Mr. Speaker, unless there is a basic trust amongst its citizens. It is true of governments as it is of leaders, of business and indeed of the world of politics. The community must build on a foundation of trust so that co-operation and a sense of partnership can develop and indeed flourish, and that is the way it is in nation building, especially in our type of federation.

When we look at what has happened in this constitutional renewal process, we find that time and again we have witnessed the federal government and its spokesmen being less than candid. We have seen this government renege on its commitments, we have seen it withdraw and subvert; certainly their actions hardly create the climate of trust and confidence.

There is a deep feeling of mistrust in our nation today, a feeling that somehow someone is being had and is going to be had. There is anxiety where there should be confidence, goodwill and optimism, and when we look at the root of that problem, Mr. Speaker, we find it in the fact that this government is pushing through its constitutional reform proposals on the same platform of deception as it did in the last election campaign, as it is doing now with its imposition of the misleading fact of the National Energy Program which is confiscatory, which talks about Canadianization but in effect is nationalizing, pitting region against region, Canadian against Canadian, and singling out and attacking one industry in one particular region.

I repeat, this government has no mandate to do that. It did not receive one in the last election and does not have one now because it does not enjoy majority public support. Canadians are becoming increasingly suspicious and have serious doubts about this package.

The process, combined with other deliberate attacks upon the region of Canada from which I come, has caused bitterness and deep division, and I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that this will escalate with the passage of this resolution.

Now, the hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Epp), our spokesman on this resolution, has outlined in fairly succinct terms the reservations that we as a party hold with respect to this measure. There are three fundamental objections with which I want to deal briefly. One is the amending formula, and as the hon. member for Provencher indicated, as far as we are concerned, the Victoria formula represents an outdated mechanism, which no longer corresponds to the reality of Canada and is rejected by the vast majority of provinces. It is unfair because it creates different classes of provinces. Quebec and Ontario have, and always will have, veto power, and with the amendments which were passed in the committee stage it looks as if we have different classes of provinces in western Canada and the Atlantic region, and I cannot accept the principle of inequality in the status of provinces.

I cannot accept that western provinces, my province, will be treated as a second or third-class province in Canada, while other provinces have a perpetual veto. We have political alienation, an unhealthy mood in western Canada right now,