

Compromise does not mean cowardice. Indeed, it is frequently the compromisers and conciliators who are faced with the severest tests of political courage as they oppose the extremist views.

The content of the resolution before us is a compromise between those who wanted more and those who wanted less and those who wanted both more and less. It may not fully satisfy every one of us—or any one of us for that matter—but it should be accepted, in my view, by the greatest number of people as a first step.

I have learned throughout the years that to compromise with others, one must first compromise with himself. I cannot ask others to give if I remain unyielding in my own first choices of means toward an end which I share with others.

So, I am compromising, as I should.

● (1530)

[*English*]

**Mr. Terry Sargeant (Selkirk-Interlake):** Mr. Speaker, like hon. members who have spoken before me, I am pleased, proud and even a bit humble about participating in this debate. I suppose my main worry is that at this point almost everything has been said and most of the substantive points have been addressed by those who have gone before me. Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, I feel I can offer some new points of view and perhaps reinforce some that have been expressed by my colleagues.

I share the concern expressed by many about why we are doing this now, why are we spending so much of the very important and very limited time of the House and its members in debating the Constitution when there are so many other issues critical to the well-being of the country. I think of our beleaguered economy, our disgracefully high unemployment and our energy situation, among others.

From the replies to questionnaires that I sent out in my constituency, it is clear that the issue of most concern is none of the foregoing, and it is certainly not the Constitution. As a matter of information, it is the threat posed by the Garrison diversion project in North Dakota.

In the first caucus meeting of our party after the constitutional proposal was presented last October, I argued the point that the government was using this issue as a whitewash in order to divert attention from the fact that it had no answers for the more important and more immediate concerns of Canadians. Since neither I nor my party call the shots in this House, we had to play the constitutional game. I do not think I need point out just how outstanding many of my caucus colleagues were at playing this game. The package before us today is vastly superior to that which was presented last October. In no small part that is due to the fine work done by my colleagues.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Sargeant:** Before I address the substance of this package I should like to put some of my background thoughts on record. As a springboard into this dissertation, I should like to quote the final sentence of the speech given in this debate by my friend, the hon. member for Nunatsiak (Mr. Ittinuar). He said: "Only together can we build a great nation."

### *The Constitution*

What are we doing when we construct a constitution, Mr. Speaker? The Oxford Dictionary defines a constitution as a body of fundamental principles according to which a state is governed. That is a little bland. A constitution is, or should be, a body of principles upon which we build a nation. The BNA Act of 1867 was such a document. So was the American constitution of some 200 years ago. Will this document of 1981 be the same? I think the answer is both yes and no, the difference lying in what kind of nation we want to build.

Permit me to digress a little, Mr. Speaker. At the turn of the century, the prime minister of the day, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, whom I considered to have been not a bad sort even though he was a Liberal, said that the twentieth century would belong to Canada. And well it should have and could have, Mr. Speaker, had it not been squandered by successive Liberal and Tory governments. These Liberal and Tory governments allowed our natural resources and our industrial complex, our very economic well-being, to be pillaged by non-Canadian interests to the point where today we are the most foreign controlled of the so-called western economies.

My vision of what Canada should and could be is very different from what Liberal and Tory governments have made of this country.

Let me take you back to 1967, the year of our centennial as a nation. I graduated from university that year, the first class of the post war boom babies to do so. We were in the ascendancy. At about that time, those of us under 25 made up about half of the population of North America. We marched to the drum of the new left, seeing this as the natural evolution of the world our forebearers had built and our parents had fought to preserve. We recognized the incredible potential of Canada and planned to be part of the development of that potential. If the first 67 years of this century had not really belonged to Canada, nobody could have convinced me or my peers in 1967, that the next 67 years would not belong to us.

As well, 1967 was a year of nationalistic fervour. We put our country on display to the world and the world gave its approval. I recall all too well making the trek from Winnipeg to Montreal on two different occasions, once by thumb, once by car, to see Expo. I remember my pride at singing O Canada in the middle of the evening in a then popular bar on St. Catherines Street. Everyone in the place put down his beer, stood up, and joined in the singing. It was great to be a Canadian that summer. We had common bonds. We visited our brothers and sisters across the land, getting to know and appreciate the differences in our lands. And we had the future by the tail. Canada would finally claim the twentieth century as its own.

All this while, I was not even a Canadian citizen. Even though I had lived here all but the first year of my life and knew no other place, I had been born in Australia, and although a Canadian in fact, I was not by law. That changed in the spring of 1968 when I swore allegiance to this country.

It was in these years of the late 1960s that I started to develop my vision of Canada. At that time, the then prime minister, Mike Pearson, just before he left office, started a new