

The Constitution

Mr. Collenette: I should say, in countering the incorrect arguments of the opposition, that 25 members from the other side have spoken. Twenty-five members from their side and only 22 from this side. So when you want to talk about the rights of Parliament and the rights of the opposition, it is in the record that there have been more interventions from the other side.

Mr. Malone: You are including the NDP.

Mr. Collenette: Of course we are including the NDP. I cannot understand the arrogance of the Conservative party which likes to protect the rights of the opposition, deriding a legitimate opposition party, that is, the New Democratic Party. They have a right to speak. Perhaps the Tories do not think so, but we do.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Collenette: I should point out that the speeches from the NDP have not been overly favourable, there have been criticisms, but to their credit they have decided to work within the parliamentary system. The official opposition, devoid of a substantive position on the whole constitutional debate, have chosen to obstruct this House in a wilful manner—a wilful manner, and I say that quite clearly.

The spurious questions of privilege that we have heard, the red herrings we have been subjected to, I think have tested the very fairness and the graciousness of the Chair. I think the Conservative party in this House has brought Parliament to a level at which it has not been for many years. That is a shame, a terrible shame on them that they are not discharging their obligations as a constructive opposition, something they pledged to be when this session reconvened.

I remember the words of the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton when he said that we would not have mindless opposition—that they would not be guilty of mindless opposition. Look at *Hansard*, look at the televised debates. If there is an example of mindless opposition greater than the one which we have sat through during the last three weeks, then I wish to be shown it. We have had obstruction, we have had trickery, and now, this afternoon in this House, the government has said, through the motion of the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard), that members of this House and the Canadian public will not put up with that kind of obstruction any longer.

The people of Canada want us to get on with budgetary matters. They want us to get on with other pressing issues dealing with energy, the Bank Act, and the 25 other bills on the order paper. They do not want to see the time of this House wasted by the manipulative tactics of the official opposition, the schemers over there, who must sit by candlelight every night with their rulebooks trying to find ways to impede the debate.

We have come to the position where tomorrow night the question will be put. But I should say, contrary to what the official opposition are spreading, the falsehoods that they are spreading throughout the country, that the debate is not

terminating. All that is happening is that the motion before us to strike a special committee to look into the resolution, and bill which accompanies the resolution, shall be voted upon. All we are saying is that phase of the debate will be over. There will be ample time in committee. We have had many excellent interventions, and I think of the one made by the hon. member for Rosedale (Mr. Crombie)—I think the Minister of Justice acknowledged his participation a little earlier—in which he brought out a legitimate question. I think of some of the legitimate questions asked by the hon. member for Saskatoon West (Mr. Hnatyshyn) who, incidentally, has not spoken in this debate. I wonder where he stands on this matter. He has asked some legitimate questions during question period. Surely, Mr. Speaker, the forum for answering those questions is in the committee.

We want all members of the House and members from the other place to have as much time as possible to grapple with the intricacies, the technicalities, and the substance of the draft constitution of Canada act.

My time is fast coming to a close, Mr. Speaker.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Collenette: I can tell by the agitation over on the other side that they recognize the impossibility of their position. They know that the federal Conservative party of Canada, the official opposition, is the subject of ridicule from one coast to the other. We know that the numbers supporting their argument are declining. Only five provinces are supporting their arguments. There has been reassessment by the government of Saskatchewan. Their friend from New Brunswick, even their friend in Nova Scotia, doesn't go along with court action and is desperately trying to put some distance between his government and the irresponsibility of his federal cousins.

What we see is a desperate party, led by desperate people who wish to obstruct and impede the business of this House, who want to deny the people of Canada a charter of rights, a protection of fundamental liberty, who want to deny the people of Canada the self-respect of having at once, at last, our own constitution, one that can be amended in Canada. Mr. Speaker, that is what the official opposition is doing in playing its game of delay and obstruction. The people of Canada are recognizing this, and I have no compunction whatsoever in standing up in support of the motion put forward by the President of the Privy Council.

It is time this House got on with its business, got on with the business of the constitution, and I submit, in closing, that the motion before us this afternoon is either a piece of naivete—and that could very well be the case, knowing the members on the other side—or another example of Tory deception and Tory trickery.

● (1700)

Hon. David Crombie (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like, on a formal basis, to urge the House to support the motion which is now before us. If hon. members are interested in having the constitution brought home quickly, with consen-