

The Constitution

Mr. Forrestall: If they have been west, north and to Atlantic Canada, then they should know that they are tearing this country apart. They are trying to impose upon us something which we do not want. They are trying to impose upon us a procedure which is abhorrent to us.

● (2020)

I am not one of those in this country who is a great defender of the Crown but I am one of its greatest exponents when it comes to the system of central government that we enjoy. I will not stand idly by and watch the Prime Minister, with the blind support of hon. members opposite, impose unilaterally measures which the people as a whole will accept only if they are debated and agreed upon in this country.

How can anyone say that they want to end this era of colonialism that has been referred to—it has been referred to in different tongues in different parts of the country—how can anyone say they want to bring an end to things as they are, that they want the constitution in Canada while at the same time bootlegging by way of the back door significant and substantive proposals and measures which are not the subject matter of wide dialogue and widespread requests from the people of the country? On what basis do hon. members opposite feel they can toy with the sentiments of western Canada or the sentiments of Newfoundland? I am sure all hon. members who are interested in this debate watched the premier of the province of Newfoundland on television.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Forrestall: Hon. members opposite laugh at him.

An hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Forrestall: Where is the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate (Mr. Baker)? Where is the minister from Newfoundland? It is a good thing those two gentlemen are not in the chamber because that is who members opposite are laughing at. They are laughing at Canadians.

An hon. Member: Sit down!

An hon. Member: Resign!

Mr. Forrestall: Resign? Me? Ha! Long before I resign, sir—

An hon. Member: You accept?

Mr. Forrestall: Long before I resign you will know that you are going to fight this to the death, because I will not permit you to act unilaterally.

An hon. Member: That is beautiful!

Mr. Chrétien: That is your motion tomorrow.

Mr. Forrestall: Bring home the constitution. Bring home the agreed-upon formula. But do not shove down the throats of Canadians amendments made to their constitution in the British House of Commons. If the Prime Minister believes that

the British House of Commons will look only at the title of the joint address, then I suggest those who support him in this belief are blind and have not researched the matter. They are acting only in blind support of the Prime Minister.

Some hon. members opposite have spoken with compassion for this country and with some understanding of it. Those of you who know me, know what my roots in Quebec are and I am proud of them—a little more proud than might be suggested by some of the laughter and jests from the other side of the chamber. But I expect that and accept it, Mr. Speaker.

I implore hon. members opposite not to let this country fall apart as a result of their acting unilaterally. We are close to agreement among the provinces on an amending formula—we are very close. We are not far apart, as the government's damnable, inexcusable advertising program would suggest. This country is not divided, although the government is trying to tell us that it is. They have shoved this view down our throats for years. But we are not divided, Mr. Speaker. This is a good, close-knit, close-working country. No one seriously objects to the principles that are embedded in this resolution but they can certainly object to the procedure. It is being done illegally, by way of the back door. I agree with some of the proposals and with some of the positions taken with respect to various premiers. If anyone wants my frank opinion, I think they were fools to go to the Supreme Court of Canada. This is a political argument.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Forrestall: After some hon. members opposite have spent 25 years in public life they can then come to me and talk about it. I wonder if they know what it means to struggle. I listened to the distinguished new member from Prince Edward Island, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. Henderson) speak of his early years in this country and his love and dedication to it. It was a good speech for a new member. I invite him to look around and get to know other hon. members who represent all the people of this country. Listen to them, please.

Mr. Henderson: I have.

Mr. Forrestall: No, you have not.

An hon. Member: You have turned a deaf ear.

Mr. Forrestall: The hon. member has turned a deaf ear. He has denied everything he said this afternoon by his blind support of unilateral action. This is a country of partnerships and I should like to speak about that for a minute or two. I will deal with two areas.

The other day I listened to—or, perhaps more correctly, I should say read, because sometimes reading is more important than listening—the speech of the Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen), a distinguished Nova Scotian, and I have one or two comments to make about his intervention in the House. I want to touch briefly on the question of equalization as the parliamentary secretary did this afternoon. I am not yet