

*Constitutional Accord*

[English]

One thing that has happened that I do not like is the passing of a resolution in the Senate yesterday by which the Senate will conduct its own hearings. It is very unfortunate that the Senate would want to conduct its own hearings at the same time as a joint committee is holding hearings.

Members of the House are elected by the people of Canada. As a New Democrat, with my belief about the Senate being a house of patronage comprised basically of political hacks, it is even somewhat difficult to accept a joint committee. As I said in French, experience has shown me that there has been some good contributions from joint committees in the past. However, I do not like the idea of a group of appointed politicians in the other place pretending to speak for Canada when it comes to constitution-building.

Furthermore, this is basically a non-partisan debate and let me say that I do not like the way they are defying the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition. He has taken a strong and courageous stand on behalf of his Party but is now being undercut by people in the other place who were appointed by Pierre Trudeau, who represents a different vision of this country. They will simultaneously hold their own hearings, call their own witnesses, and try to present their own point of view which may result in a deadlock for Parliament itself.

The other place really is a house of patronage and if there ever was an argument to abolish the Senate as it now exists, I believe this is it, and this is the time. The Senate should either be abolished or reformed. There is no place in the 20th century for a House that is not elected but has legislative power. The action of the Senate yesterday is another example of that abuse of power. The Senators, who make up a Liberal majority, are serving another master, Pierre Elliott Trudeau; he appointed most of them to the Senate. Those very senators who are serving Pierre Trudeau are trying to undercut the present leader of the Liberal Party, the Leader of the Opposition.

I suppose they will also put in a bid to have access to the parliamentary channel in order to televise their hearings. I believe that all Members of the House agree that the parliamentary channel should exist for the elected Members of Parliament so that our hearings may be televised and the people of this country can see who is coming to talk to their elected representatives about the Constitution. It should not be there for appointees from yesterday's Canada.

I have talked about the new and old Canada. The old Canada was represented by Pierre Elliott Trudeau, rigid centralism and confrontation across the country. As a Member of Parliament from Saskatchewan, I know about the alienation that such a vision created in Saskatchewan. That is not the kind of Canada I want, nor do I think it is the kind of Canada that any political Party in this House wants today.

We have a new Canada of co-operative federalism that was talked about years ago by Tommy Douglas, Robert Cliche, Lester Pearson and Bob Stanfield. We have a new Canada of co-operative federalism that is now being promoted by the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, and the leader of my party, the Hon. Member for Oshawa (Mr. Broadbent). That is the kind of Canada about which I have always dreamed. Pierre Elliott Trudeau's Canada is the Canada of yesterday. That is why I am worried about the hearings the Senators are undertaking and promoting in the other place.

My vision of this country involves a strong central Government that is able to equalize conditions among people, regions and provinces. However, my vision of this country also is one in which there must be equality of provinces. There must be strong provinces that can legislate and reflect their legitimate differences.

We must recognize the diversity of this country and have flexibility so that there can be programs in the Town of Kamsack, or the Village of Buchanan that are different from programs in Newfoundland, Montreal or Vancouver. At the same time I see a government that can meet the national objectives and programs that are so important to deliver services across the country.

[Translation]

Also in Canada I believe it is fitting that Quebec be considered as a distinct society because Quebec is different, Quebec needs a different status. It is the reality in Canada. My God, Madam Speaker, it was Lester Pearson who led the way with the Canada Pension Plan and the Quebec Pension Plan. It was Mr. Pearson who led the way, believing as he did in co-operative federalism. Messrs. Tommy Douglas and Bob Stanfield as well as the Right Hon. Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) also took that direction, and now it is the direction taken by the three Parties here in the House. It is the reality in Canada. Quebec is different, and if we want unity in this country we must acknowledge this reality in the Canadian Constitution.

Coming from Saskatchewan and western Canada, I am proud that the Premiers have recognized that Canadian reality. I am convinced that almost all Members of this House agree with me on that.

[English]

My vision of Canada also includes the aboriginal people as a distinct and unique people who need more constitutional protection. I hope that through these hearings we can mobilize public opinion and convince legislatures, primarily in Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, that they should include in the Accord recognition of Indian rights to self-government in Canada. That was something which was accepted in principle, certainly by the federal Parliament and by six other legislatures and, I am sure, by the National Assembly in the Province of Quebec.