

*The Constitution*

That experience as a child has indelibly marked me. It has left me with a passion for the preservation of that which preserved me as a youth, which is to say that Canadian identity, whatever it may be, served almost as my cocoon in those six years I lived in the United States.

One of the reasons I sought election as a New Democrat was seeing what is being done to my Canada, the future that is being shaped for it by those who now rule in this country and seeing what I still believe is the pursuit of a course that can only end in catastrophe for this country.

I do not believe that the majority of Canadians, given the choice to express themselves, would willingly go down the road that this government and other provincial governments in this country have mapped. I believe that given the time to reflect thoughtfully on the problems confronting the country, Canadians will come to reasonable, workable solutions.

• (1950 )

It is on the basis of that belief that I mounted a two-day constituent assembly in Edmonton East.

After several invitations had been sent out, invitations to every person in the riding through the vehicle of the householder, 21 persons and five organization representatives filled in the ballots, out of the 36 persons and 15 organizations that attended. In addition, of the 84 ballots mailed 16 had been returned by January 7, which is the deadline I had to set in order to get the report ready to present to the standing committee.

I will not read the entire report because I do not have time and because quite frankly hon. members can read it for themselves, but I would like to convey some highlights. First, of those 42 who turned back ballots, 76 per cent want a reformed Senate. There is no surprise there. Fifty-five per cent favour the Triple-E model, but 40 per cent opted for a Senate elected by proportional representation. Sixty-two per cent said any reformed Senate should have the same powers it has now.

With regard to aboriginal peoples, 76 per cent said amendments to the Constitution affecting aboriginal peoples should only happen with the consent of those peoples. There was strong agreement, 71 per cent, that

there should be a commitment to the entrenchment of aboriginal peoples' inherent right to self-government in the Constitution.

Almost two-thirds of all respondents thought sexual equality guarantees in the charter should be extended to cover the entire Constitution, and only 26 per cent wanted to ditch the so-called notwithstanding clause. Fifty-eight per cent wanted to keep it in some form or other.

Half rejected the federal government's plan to grant itself new powers to ensure the efficient functioning of the economic union, but the proposal to narrow the Bank of Canada's mandate to strictly that of fighting inflation was rejected by 60 per cent.

The idea of guarantees of collective rights of the sort found in the so-called social charter was endorsed by 60 per cent of the respondents, with only 26 per cent opposed. The endorsement per cent of these guarantees is as follows: clean air and water, 62 per cent; minimum standard of living, 60 per cent; decent health care, 60 per cent; a right to an education and a job, 60 per cent.

Almost the same level of support, 57 per cent, was expressed for the use of referenda and again 57 per cent of the respondents liked the idea of recall.

Sixty-four per cent opposed property rights for corporations and although 52 per cent thought property rights for individuals was a good idea, 72 per cent agreed that even if such rights were enshrined they should be subject to being overridden in cases of expropriation for socially necessary purposes.

Alberta has been in the news a great deal of late because of the remarks of our premier regarding bilingualism and multiculturalism. The majority, 53 per cent, thought bilingualism should be reviewed. However, only 29 per cent thought it should be eliminated and 34 per cent thought it should be kept as is or expanded.

Similarly with multiculturalism, 38 per cent said eliminate it, but 19 per cent said it should be kept with restrictions, and 28 per cent said it should be kept or expanded. A total of 47 per cent said keep it in some form.

In this regard, the premier of Alberta does not speak for my constituents.