

The Constitution

• (2140)

There is no question that the people of Cariboo—Chilcotin believe that the Senate as it is now constituted is unacceptable. Either abolish it or reform it, they told me, but it must be changed. While we are at it, they suggested that the Commons could use a little work as well: less partisanship and more free votes. Our governing institutions must ensure that the needs and interests of all regions are better looked after.

Unfortunately, when it came to some issues, such as Senate reform and distinct society, there were some in my constituency who threw their arms up in the air in exasperation. As one editorial stated: "Quebec and the other constitutional issues are just too far away from the Cariboo for the local people to take them seriously".

If there is any issue that brings this constitutional debate home to us in the Cariboo, it is that of Canada's first citizens. The Cariboo—Chilcotin's population is nearly 20 per cent aboriginal, representing 32 different bands. In some communities the majority of the population is native Indian. It is the people of these communities who will have to live with the solutions we create, and it is their co-operation that will be instrumental in making the process work.

Most agreed that self-government is both desired as well as necessary. But as was the case with Quebec, autonomy is conditional. It too must be achieved within the confines of Canada. As one constituent said: "Native self-government must include both rights as well as responsibilities, and it must be restricted to within the over-all Canadian system".

The situation as it exists presently is unacceptable to natives and non-natives alike. There is a reliance on a system that is overly paternalistic. It is a system that stifles economic, social, and cultural independence, and it is a system that both natives and non-natives alike want to see dissolved.

There is little doubt in my mind that everyone who participated in the meetings came to understand that this is not an easy process, but few would disagree with the need to find a unity solution. There was a great deal of pride expressed in being Canadian, and in the end I think this is what helped us to get past the irritants and begin to look for constructive solutions.

One mayor said it best when he approached me a couple of days after a particularly stormy session: "Frankly I am embarrassed by what was said the other day. I realize that we were allowing the irritants to get in the way of presenting constructive solutions. I know that when you return to Ottawa you will have to do better than that. I hope you will look past the anger and remember that we love this country and we expect that you will do what is necessary to keep it together".

It is evident to me that the people of the Cariboo want to see this nation remain one, a nation that embodies basic fairness and one with the wisdom to acknowledge its obvious differences, differences that can make us stronger. This is the Canada those in the Cariboo want to be part of.

There were many voices from the Cariboo that comprise what I have conveyed to the House tonight. I know that many of them will have heard themselves in the words I have used. It is only fitting that I close my comments with the words of one of Cariboo's older and I suspect possibly wiser constituents. She said: "Being Canadian should be something of which we are proud. Being Canadian should be something which we practise".

Mr. Murray W. Dorin (Edmonton Northwest): Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise this evening and present here in the House of Commons of Canada a report from the citizens of Edmonton Northwest. Like my colleagues from all parts of Canada, I have received thousands of communications from constituents concerned with the unity of Canada. I have received letters from seniors who have built this country, veterans who have defended our democratic institutions, students who will inherit the responsibility for this country, business people and people from all other walks of life.

Many of my constituents are worried that our country will come apart over our differences. Many express anger over the perceived inability of elected persons at all levels to solve some very serious problems in society.

We are all aware in this House that Canadians want facts in order to help them decide important issues, not mixed messages and old time rhetoric.

In general, my constituents tell me that they are no longer satisfied with the old ways of constitution-making. It may have been okay for Sir John A. Macdonald in 1867 and even Pierre Trudeau in 1982. However in 1992