

The Constitution

exchange of ideas in committee. If members have concerns on this issue, before they place their bets they should try us in committee.

An hon. Member: The ten premiers did.

Mr. Simmons: I will talk about the ten premiers a little later on. Let me address myself to some of the things my good friend from Yellowhead said, the gentleman who is facing a leadership review in February. They call him out west the white elephant from Yellowhead. Let me talk about some of the points about which he was concerned yesterday. What was his response to our gesture? We said, "Here is a working paper. Go work on it some more, refine it and come back with a product that we can take over to Westminster to get our constitution back in this country where it belongs". What was his response? The Leader of the Opposition professed his usual great love for Parliament. His government said that it wanted to augment committees. What was his response to the proposal that a parliamentary committee draft an address rather than having the government ram something down his throat? His response was red herrings, good old red herrings from the good old white elephant. The Leader of the Opposition used to call himself a red Tory. Now he specializes in red herrings. The proposed joint committee is being asked to consider a proposed address to the Queen. It is being asked to consider what form it ought to take. In other words the joint committee is being asked to draft, on the basis of a working paper, the penultimate or the ultimate form of the address which should go forward, depending upon whether the House concurs without change. Members opposite, and in particular the Leader of the Opposition, claim there is no opportunity to amend the proposed address. The fact is that the ultimate form of the address does not yet exist on paper. The committee will prepare that form. Certainly the government will present its ideas to the committee. That is our right and responsibility. Certainly those ideas will be the same as those in the document referred to in the motion. Certainly members of the committee will put forward alternatives, perhaps in the form of amendments to motions before the committee. Perhaps even some government members will have such amendments as well. I do not know. We cannot predict that, nor do we want to. What we want is an address to Her Majesty that will achieve the over-all objectives stated publicly by the Prime Minister and, indeed, embodied in the resolution and the document accompanying it. That is the white elephant's red herring number one.

● (2150)

Next we heard him say that the proposed committee ought to travel all over the country. Members should remember that people have been travelling on this one for 53 years. I do not think there is any lack of information, any lack of ideas or lack of exchange of ideas on this. What is required now is for us to make up our minds on which set of information, which particles of truth, we want to embody, then ship it off to England and get the response back that we very much want to have. The travel is behind us. This is not the time for travel. We

have had 53 years of travelling. Now let us get our heads together and make up our minds. That is his second red herring. He wants a travelling circus. I say no to that.

Then the Leader of the Opposition complains about the time limits. How long do we need, after 53 years, to arrive at a consensus upon which there is no shortage of information, no shortage of input? Then we hear the Leader of the Opposition talk about the provision of a quorum. I have enumerated three or four objections the hon. gentleman made to the resolution and the form in which it has been introduced. But now I come to what must have been his finest hour. All the objections which have gone before, I submit, were just preliminary. He was just warming to his subject. But now, with the matter before him, Mr. Speaker, here is the white elephant, the walking dead from Yellowhead. Here he is with the vilest outrage of all. This is it. Nothing ever was as bad as this. There he stood with sagging jowl, with penetrating gaze but without the intellect of a Diefenbaker, projecting the appearance of one who understands what he is talking about. Well, what was he talking about. What is it he was objecting to about the quorum? Has the Leader of the Opposition finally stumbled on the truth for which he has been searching for all these years, the clear evidence which to date has eluded him, that we are a bunch of parliamentary scoundrels and legislative varmints? Has he finally discovered that he's got what he always needed to clench his case against us? Surely, if we can judge from his excited rhetoric of yesterday, he is without a doubt on the very verge of driving the final nail in our political coffin. What is it he is so exercised about? What is he objecting to? I will tell you. Does he not realize that the section he objects to is taken, verbatim, word for word, not from the mind of the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chrétien) or from the Prime Minister, not even from the mind of the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East, if that were possible—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Simmons: No, Mr. Speaker. Taken verbatim, word for word, from the motion in our Standing Orders establishing special joint committees. Does the hon. gentleman not read the rules he lives by here? It was taken word for word from our standing rules governing the establishment of joint committees which operate under the auspices of this chamber and the chamber down the way, the Senate chamber. That is what the fuss has been all about, Mr. Speaker. That is what the Leader of the Opposition has been out misleading the public of Canada about. And he expects to have credibility after February. He will have a job keeping it until February.

Some hon. Members: Oh!

Mr. Simmons: There is so much more we could say in terms of what the Leader of the Opposition has been saying. His problem is that he should really stop looking over his shoulder, he should start looking straight ahead and then he might be able to see the future of the nation. He might be able to see the vision which is embodied in the document before us. As it is, looking either way, Mr. Speaker, he can only see the president