

The Constitution

to ask the question that way is a form of blackmail, those who think this is all a bluff are dangerously mistaken.

The economic unity of Canada concerns not only big companies, merchants and bankers. We all suffer when commercial barriers between the provinces are higher than those between European countries. This goes way beyond profits, it affects employment and consumer prices. Our potential is that of our descendants.

• (1900)

They challenge us to find solutions to this problem, and to find them together. According to polls, the Canadian people want the constitutional review to take a back step to the economic issue because of the exceptional seriousness of the recession and its consequences. If this was a brand new issue, nobody would object to this way of thinking. Unfortunately, the constitutional issue has been around for so long that it is now closely linked to the future of our economy. There cannot be of course the necessary confidence for a real economic recovery as long as the political uncertainty resulting from the constitutional deadlock prevails. It would be a mistake to believe that investment decisions can be taken when, because of the uncertainty about the future, the rules of the game remain unknown. In Quebec, our economy had already suffered enough before the 1980 referendum and since the failure of the Meech Lake accord for us to consider putting off the question once again.

I now ask all Canadian men and women to think about all that we have accomplished together and to all that we risk losing with the splitting up of this country. Citizenship does not offer only advantages, it also brings some responsibility. How could we tell our parents, who have passed on to us with pride and confidence one of the most beautiful countries in the world: "I have not been able to pass on your inheritance to your grand-children. Because of negligence, weariness and apprehension, our generation has turned its back on a glorious past and has given up a brilliant future."

To love Canada, to want to make it better is not a denial of our Quebec origin nor of our pride in our roots. On the contrary. Who are the people today who serve

best the interests of their fellow countrymen? Are those the men and women who want to build an even better and more prosperous Canada for their children to enjoy, a Canada within which Quebec may continue to develop safely and freely? Are they the ones who want to split up and weaken Canada, those who want to isolate Quebec and shake its economy, those who build or those who sulk?

In Canada, we always go for the peaceful solutions. Peoples of the world admire us for that quality that our ancestors valued. We have to build a better country with a better solution to save this great country. It is our blessing, our present to the people around us, our duty towards ourselves and the future generations.

[English]

Mr. John Harvard (Winnipeg—St. James): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to participate in this special debate in the House of Commons tonight.

As a member of Parliament I like to keep my ear close to the ground. I like to be listening to what my constituents of Winnipeg—St. James are saying. In the next few minutes I want to offer what I have been hearing from my constituents.

First of all, I would say that within my constituency on this issue of constitutional remaking and the renewal of Canada, there is a lot of good will and a lot of generosity.

My constituents of Winnipeg—St. James feel a bit more comfortable with the constitutional process now than they did with the process during the Meech Lake debate. I think it is mainly because this process is a bit more open. They feel that there is an opportunity for Canadians to provide input, as opposed to Meech Lake where most of it was done behind closed doors. There is that improvement. I am glad to report that.

I can tell you from what I have heard from my constituents in Winnipeg—St. James. They do not want Canada to break up. They do not.

I hear very little of the phrase: "Well, let Quebec go". I heard quite a bit of that a couple of years ago out of frustration and out of concern about where the country was going. I do not hear a lot of it now.