

*The Constitution*

majority of Canadians will not closely follow this debate. They have other things to do. They have families to raise, other business, social, human and personal commitments, and they will not closely follow the details of these discussions. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us in dealing with this aspect of the measure which is before us to try to indicate to Canadians—in my case to the people of Dartmouth on the eastern shore of Nova Scotia—as it is our responsibility, some of the dangers which are inherent in what is proposed.

In the next few minutes I hope I can in orderly fashion deal, albeit superficially, with some of these matters. It is important to patriate the constitution; there is no question about that. Along with all who have spoken, I too express very sincerely my support for a strong central government. There is nothing new about that; it was expressed in 1867, 1864 and even prior to that. I support this notion in some kind of spirit of true partnership, a true partnership with strong provincial governments.

These concepts are not in conflict. Indeed, there cannot be such a conflict in our system and under our structure. The conflict arises only when one, the predominant partner—and I say to the Minister of State for Mines (Mrs. Erola) that that is not chauvinistic—attempts to impose upon the other, as the Minister of Transport put it this afternoon. His concern is that we are imposing. This concern is not with the content but with the procedure and that is what I am saying. There can only be conflict when the senior partner in this historic and traditional partnership deliberately and unilaterally imposes its strength and its will on the junior partner.

We have conducted our affairs in this country, not for 113 years, but for virtually 200 years under the British Crown. Is Canada such a bad place? Are we not well off?

**Mrs. Erola:** We could be better off.

**Mr. Forrestall:** Mr. Speaker, the minister says that we are a good country, we are well off but we could be better off. They were saying that in 1854, in 1858, in 1864 and we are better off. There is nothing wrong with what we are now, and we have done it all under the British Crown. My objection to the position and the process which we are now forced to follow and probably will be forced to bow to because of the weight of the government majority, is simply to the procedure, not the content. The government is wrong. It will destroy this country and it will destroy it knowingly and willingly with no regrets whatsoever. If the hon. members opposite want my conclusion now, I can tell them what it is and sit down.

**An hon. Member:** Don't keep us in suspense.

**Mr. Forrestall:** That would be the typical retort or response of a backbencher, supporter or trained seal. The Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council (Mr. Collenette) this afternoon in one of the most scurrilous attacks on the opposition I have heard for a long time in this chamber suggested we were wasting the time of the House in this debate. It is rather interesting that the government backbenchers themselves, out of a sense of attempting to achieve some

vague level of glory, have spoken more frequently than the opposition parties put together. Why is that? Who is delaying the debate? In any event, nobody can delay this debate.

If every member in this chamber wants to get on his or her feet and speak to his or her country then, by God, it is their right, and no Speaker sitting in that chair, no prime minister of this country and no government, no matter what their intent or their end purpose, will ever change that. The moment it is changed, we will not have a Canada. I suggest to my colleagues from Quebec that they sit up and listen and turn around because I might just be what they would like to attack, but I am not. I have spent 25 years in public life. I can say that Quebecers have not had the courage to travel to western Canada, to northern Canada—

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mrs. Hervieux-Payette:** We have been there more often than you have been to Quebec.

**Mr. Forrestall:** I gather that is a rejection of what I had to say, and I apologize, obviously, they all have, and they will not have a question of privilege or a point of order.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Hervieux-Payette:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I should like to remind my hon. colleague that as MP for Mercier I visited the west four times this year. I went to Edmonton, three weeks ago, I went to Calgary, I went to Vancouver; I would ask the hon. member to kindly retract his remark.

[*English*]

**Mr. Nielsen:** Come up and see me in the Yukon sometime.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker):** Order, please. I am not sure whether that constitutes a valid point of order or whether it is a point of debate, but in either case the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East (Mr. Forrestall) had already retracted the comment. So I think we might recognize again the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East, unless the Minister of State for Mines (Mrs. Erola) has a point of order.

**Mrs. Erola:** Since the hon. member has retracted his statement, I should really withdraw mine as well, but I would like to bring to his attention the fact that I too have on a number of occasions this summer been out west, from Yellowknife to British Columbia to Calgary. I have enjoyed each visit and I am looking forward to further visits.

**Mr. Chrétien:** I suppose I should make the same point.

**Mr. Forrestall:** Mr. Speaker, I am intrigued by the indignation of the members opposite, because if they have travelled so much in Canada why do they not understand what they are doing to this country?

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!