

*The Constitution*

this. I cannot understand why we ought to fall into the trap suggested by persons like Premier Lévesque, that somehow the elected representatives of the people of Canada are "Ottawa guys". He repeated that last night. I do not happen to be an "Ottawa guy". I happen to be a representative of the people of an important part of Canada in the province of Nova Scotia, and I regard every other member of Parliament, not as an "Ottawa guy", but as a person who has been given a mandate by his electors to come to the Parliament of Canada and to deliberate in the Parliament of Canada, and it happens, by accident and not by the intrinsic nature of our mandate, that the location of these deliberations is Ottawa. Let us have no more talk about "Ottawa guys". Why shrink from the opportunity to deal with this important matter in the Parliament of Canada?

I believe, if I may say so, Mr. Speaker, that it is also necessary to entrench in the constitution the principle of equalization. The idea of sharing is one of the most significant features of Canada and of Canadian federalism. I hope we will do everything in our power to nourish the concept of sharing, the concept of equalization which is now proposed in this resolution. Successive governments have given support to this principle and it has led to an array of federal policies and programs which now form part of our national consensus.

● (1550)

For example, if I may use just one or two statistics to show the significance of this concept, at present, fiscal equalization, which has been a separate and distinct program since 1957-58, will require during the current year total disbursements in excess of \$3.3 billion, and payments to the provinces from the federal treasury in 1980-81 will amount to \$12.5 billion.

Because I think it is important, I will mention also that a theme very frequently emphasized by members of Parliament and many others during the Quebec referendum was the theme of sharing. It is also worth noting that it was the concept which received the widest consensus among the provincial governments.

I want to assure the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom), who expressed some concern about the wording on equalization in the resolution, that the wording conforms with a proposal, as I understand it, which was made by the province of British Columbia and which could very well have had the support of some other provinces, contrary to his impression that we have brought forward a formulation of equalization which was rejected by nine provinces of Canada.

We are firmly committed to the principle of equalization. We do not need this in order to make direct payments to individuals, as the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville implied. We do not need it, indeed, to continue the program of equalization. But we do believe it is important to enshrine this concept in a constitution of Canada so that sharing will be an important ingredient or element in the future of our national life.

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

**Mr. MacEachen:** In my opinion it is necessary for Parliament to act, for the reasons I have mentioned, to make these forward steps in the way of entrenchment of human rights, in the way of seeking an amending formula and in the way of embedding the concept of equalization in the constitution. It is necessary for Parliament to act if these things are going to be done, but I believe I can carry the argument further and say that it is urgent for Parliament to act because Parliament is the only institution in the country which is capable of and responsible for maintaining and upholding Canadian sovereignty.

All of us would agree, for example, that Parliament must act to protect the territorial sovereignty of Canada from military threat. All of us would agree that the Parliament of Canada should act to protect the economic sovereignty of Canada from encroachment by foreign powers. I suggest that this function of the Parliament of Canada is not a symbolic function. It is not just a mirage that I am seeing when I talk about the important role of the Parliament of Canada. Witness the efforts of the Parliament of Canada at the United Nations Law of the Sea Conference to secure for Canada better protection for our fisheries and sovereign rights over the natural resources of the continental shelf. A single legislature or combination of legislatures or a single provincial government or a combination of them could not achieve what was achieved by Canada in extending the jurisdiction over the living resources of the sea 200 miles offshore. That was accomplished by the Parliament of Canada and the Government of Canada acting in a way which could not be emulated by any other institution in this country.

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

**Mr. MacEachen:** I ask, why should the Parliament of Canada not be asked now to act to secure Canada's constitutional sovereignty? Parliament is the only institution in the country which represents all Canadians and also the only one which can request constitutional action from Westminster. Hon. members opposite who believe in the rights of Parliament ought to be rather pleased that they have been called upon by the government at this time in our history to reinforce the place of Parliament in our national life.

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

**Mr. McDermid:** Thank you, your holiness. That is very nice of you.

**Mr. MacEachen:** The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) has said that a constitution cannot be imposed arbitrarily on this nation by one individual or government. No one could disagree with that. The constitution cannot be imposed by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) or by the ministry. Action on the constitution can be taken only by the Parliament of Canada, Canadians themselves acting through their elected representatives in Parliament. I find it very strange that at this stage in our history when Parliament, which is the only institution in the country which can act this way, is being, in a