

control and determine the holding of a referendum by a provincial government on a subject such as leaving the federal system.

• (1630)

For political reasons which were no doubt right and proper in 1980 the decision was made not to exercise those. The controlling parameters today would certainly include the ability to scrutinize a question and make sure that it is clear and unambiguous and not like the deliberately cloudy formula put forward in October 1980.

Second, there is a necessary control of the timing and I think it is clear that this will be the last referendum allowed. We cannot have the country on roller skates going from one referendum to another year after year; once more, no more after.

Third, there are to be no special deals, constitutional deals made in preparation for referendum for any one province within the country. Canada is not a supermarket offering a special one day deal for one occasion at any time.

To come back to the approach of the Liberal government, is there a Chrétien doctrine? The leader of the Reform Party has suggested that there is not. I think the difference and the subtlety of the approach are well rooted in common law constitutionalism and common law constitution making. The Chrétien doctrine is closer today to the pluralistic federalism of the Pearson era, sometimes called co-operative federalism, than it is to the neo-Keynesian imperatives of the Mulroney government and to some extent perhaps the Trudeau government at certain periods.

The approach is not the Sermon on the Mount, a set of abstract a priori rules conceived in an ivory tower in the political vacuum away from concrete problems. It is essentially a pragmatic, empirical, problem oriented, step by step approach. I think this is the only one proper and possible effectively in an era of fundamental change such as we have in Canada and in the world community as a whole.

Among the considerations, to examine that sovereignty is a 19th century concept is simply out of date in an era when supernational legal engagements like the free trade agreement, like NAFTA and NATO are entered into and, as we saw in our debate on cruise missiles, are regarded as binding even if governments may think in particular cases that they were wrong, as I think our government felt in relation to the Mulroney decision on cruise missiles. We accepted it as part of our supernational obligations.

There is the passing of sovereignty even in a period of which you notice the contradictions, the survival of the contradictions, and the revival of ethnic particularism in a pathological sense as we have had in Bosnia-Herzegovina and other areas of the world.

What we really need is an operational philosophy of federalism rigorously empirical and problem oriented. Among the areas in which I think action has already been taken I will

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commend the emergence of this operational pragmatism in the approach to the infrastructure program which is designed to produce the economic recovery. It involves continuing and close co-operation with the provinces and with municipalities in which abstract a priori structures of government that divide power between federal and provincial governments are sensibly modified by the parties. It also involves the removal of interprovincial trade barriers and that rests on negotiation and discussion.

In my own constituency my assistants are now arguing before the electoral boundaries commissions, presenting a case. It involves a commitment to plural ethnic constituencies and not the mono-ethnic constituencies of yesteryear which are very close to 19th century approaches to multiculturalism or multinational societies.

In the area of native Indians I commend the House to Bill C-33 and Bill C-34 whose debate was rudely stopped a week ago just as it was beginning.

• (1635)

There you do have a species of consensual pragmatism between the main parties, the native Indian leaders in the Yukon and the government in which a highly pragmatic, step by step approach to self-government within Canadian federalism and subject to the bill of rights has been worked out. I think this is a model of intelligent constitution making for the 21st century. We have arrived at it well before the 21st century.

The reform of Parliament is something to which the Prime Minister is personally committed. I think he realizes, because his approach is closer to the gentler pragmatism of Prime Minister Pearson, that Parliament has a function, that it is a necessary countervailing power to the executive. The changes that can be made here are wholly within federal power.

At the end of the day you do have a continuing, coherent constitutional process yielding precise, empirically based principles. They are problem oriented and therefore likely to stand the test of challenge of changing events.

The problem with the Sermon on the Mount is that it is an illusion created for people who want simple panaceas, divorce from concrete problem situations.

There, as I see it, is the Chrétien doctrine. It is a constitutional philosophy. As was said in Molière's *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*, you can speak prose all your life, even though you do not recognize it. The essence of operational pragmatism is at the heart of the received common law constitutionalism we have had in Canada and which has been enriched by civil law components as well.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague, who is a specialist on constitutional issues, made some remarks which I think should be pointed out. As to whether the question in Quebec will be clear, we told you