

Supply

From his point of view, what would happen, because Quebec has that law that there has to be a referendum in Quebec, if that referendum proceeds on a very clear question as to whether Quebec wants to stay in Canada—and of course we do not frame that question—and what would be his view if that question proceeded on the basis that we cannot put an agreement to Quebec before that October deadline?

Mr. Len Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has asked me if I would put forward my views even though they may not be the views of my party.

I want to say to him that any views I give are those of my own party and vice versa because I do have my say within our party caucus and discuss the matter with my caucus members. I do not go off giving views that do not belong to the Liberal Party of Canada. That is called unity and that is what we are talking about in this entire debate.

To address the several questions which the member has just put to me, I want to say that if I were to give him the answer the minister opposite, who is handling the constitutional questions at the present time and federal-provincial relations, would really thank me for giving him the precise answers. If I were to come up with all the answers for the government at this time I would probably be the most famous Canadian going.

To ask me to tell everybody else what is going to happen in the days ahead is a little bit unfair because if we had the answers we would be going in that direction.

I said in my speech this morning that the rhetoric has to be toned down on this issue. I also said that the demands have to be toned down from all angles and that flexibility must improve across the country.

Parliament could be recalled this summer—the option is open—and we could debate the constitutional proposals or whatever. We could also be here to discuss whether or not we are having a referendum. But to say that if I had the answers I could give them now, anything else that I might say would disrupt the very sensitivity of the items that are being discussed now.

The member mentioned our long tenure here in Parliament. My long tenure in Parliament tells me not to disrupt an already sensitive situation. What I have said is that we must have the political will and the determination to handle this situation. This morning I said there is

no such thing as failure. I also said that every person in this House, on both sides of this House, must make it their business to see to it that the constitutional issue is settled and that we can get on with the economy and the other great interests of this nation.

Let me remind everybody that there is far more to lose by standing aloof and making great demands of our own by individual groups or organizations than there ever will be to gain.

All Canadians and this Parliament must come together. We are a nation known as negotiators. We now have to negotiate to put this Constitution together and we are not going to do it if we are going to go off in 10 different directions at the same time. Now is the time to prove our mettle.

I want to say once more, in reply to the hon. member, as I said this morning, that 112,000 young Canadians are lying in cemeteries abroad, in Korea and throughout Europe, 18, 19, 21 and 24 years of age. They fought for this country and they fought for the free world. If we do not come to grips and unite this nation at this time as did the Fathers of Confederation, the Baldwins, the Lafontaines, the Georges-Etienne Cartiers and the Macdonalds, and all those great statesmen who followed on in the 20th century, then we are not only failing those 112,000 young Canadians who died in the name of freedom, we are losing faith with those who built this country in the beginning.

• (1510)

I say to members on both sides of the House and to the hon. member who asked me the question: We must have the political will to face up to this issue, to sit down and negotiate and bring the Constitution of Canada into fruition for years to come. We have the ability to do it. We must not lose it.

Mr. Brian L. Gardiner (Prince George—Bulkley Valley): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to have the opportunity to enter into debate today on the motion to concur in the Main Estimates of the government, the spending estimates of the government.

It gives me an opportunity to raise a number of concerns in this House about issues across the country and in particular around some of the particular spending plans or lack of spending plans by the Government of Canada as they relate to my riding in northern British Columbia.