

*The Constitution*

**Mr. Stollery:** I have been a Member of Parliament for nearly nine years.

**An hon. Member:** Taxi!

**Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton):** You should do the decent thing and resign.

**Mr. Stollery:** Since I have been here, this chamber, reflecting Canadian life as it has been in the 1970s, has seen many debates on complex issues such as energy and economics, including employment and inflation. We are now contemplating pension reform. These have been increasingly complicated issues resulting in an exponential increase in the need for study and knowledge by Members of Parliament. They are issues which have reflected the revolution that started with the oil crisis of 1972, a revolution that has put a stamp on the 1970s.

It is again an irony that this simple constitutional resolution that many Conservatives say is unnecessary because the British North America Act works, is in fact a vital element in the ability of the national government in Canada to govern and to resolve the issues of energy, unemployment, inflation, pension reform, etc.

At the beginning of this debate the super patriot from Athabasca stood here and shouted "O Canada" while the provincial government in his province of Alberta closed down his own town and put his constituents out of work.

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

**An hon. Member:** Lies.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier):** Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but this allotted time has expired.

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

**Mr. F. Oberle (Prince George-Peace River):** Mr. Speaker, since I last spoke in this debate—in this important, historic debate—certain events have taken place. As my colleagues have done, I want to join in paying tribute to members on all sides of the House who spent weekends and many hours serving the nation and serving Parliament in a committee which did an exemplary job of presenting to the nation, in living colour on television, the debate which now comes to another conclusion.

Certain events took place in Parliament itself. We have been accused of all kinds of things, such as delay, obstruction and filibuster. I happen to think that certain people in Parliament learned an important lesson, that is, that this institution will actually work in times of crisis and in times when the sensitivities of Canadians throughout the country are aroused over matters that take place here. I will never apologize for my contribution to whatever that was called, be it filibuster of delay.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) learned an important lesson. He had to learn that the timetables he had set for himself and for the nation in bringing about his version of

constitutional renewal, had to be sacrificed to the will of Parliament.

We gained some important time; time for parliamentarians to reflect on what is happening. We gained time for provincial premiers and provincial legislatures to address the problem and we gained time for all Canadians throughout the country to become better acquainted with what is about to happen in Parliament in this crucial period in our history.

• (2130)

I welcome the opportunity to speak once more. I thank my colleagues on this side of the house, some of whom will not be able to speak because there is not enough time and so I thank them for giving me the opportunity to speak a second time. Like every member in this House, I receive mail, not just from my own constituents but from people throughout the country who live in wonderment who are bewildered and confused because they no longer understand what this debate is all about. They no longer understand what the Prime Minister, this great social reformer, this great institutional engineer, wants to do with Canada. They have developed a certain respect for the institution of Canada, the important and crucial components of which are the provincial governments. People have learned to respect their provincial premiers. Our provincial premiers came to Ottawa and participated in a public debate last weekend. The provincial premiers were on one side and the Prime Minister on the other. There was a breakdown of communications. People cannot understand for the life of them why Canadians are diametrically opposed over a matter which my friends on the other side say is so simple, straightforward and so easy to understand. There is a reason for this bewilderment and confusion. People participating in this debate no longer address themselves to the questions which were initially debated after the Quebec referendum which prompted the urgency and indecent haste now demonstrated. The people of Quebec were provided with an opportunity to choose whether they still wanted to be part of this confederation of this great nation, which Sir John A. Macdonald could see 114 years ago as becoming one of the greatest in the universe, or whether their legitimate aspirations in terms of industry, culture and religion would be better met with a separate state.

Certain things were wrong and were discussed at the time of the Quebec referendum. Many of us travelled to the province of Quebec. Several of the premiers who participated in last weekend's debate also travelled to Quebec at the time of the referendum as did the Prime Minister and some of his ministers. They promised the people of Quebec there would be fundamental and immediate action if they once again chose to stay in confederation and played the important role which Quebec had always played in the union.

We did not talk about a charter of rights. We did not talk about the things which now predominate in the debate. In fact, we talked about things much different than that. For instance, we talked about such things as the reform of the Senate. We talked about electoral reform. We talked about better equality