

Government Orders

In a way one has to feel sorry for those with such an attitude. There is the politics of division, discord, and suspicion. Their aspirations are oriented toward tearing down not building up, wrecking not improving. The real Canada is far from perfect but it is the best country in the world. No Canadian should feel bashful about saying it loud and saying it often. It is the simple truth. The real Canada at its best is all about tolerance, civility, peace and prosperity. These are values that Canadians want expressed more vividly through a renewed Constitution. These are values which they want to have translated and given increased meaning in their daily lives.

This legislation, of course, does not create the perfect future for this country. It would be preferable if such a precautionary measure as this legislation was not needed at all. The commitment of my government is to Canada's renewal and every tool should be available to meet any possibility. For this reason, I urge the House to approve this legislation. I ask, in particular, the members of the New Democratic Party to put partisanship aside.

Mr. Murphy: After that stupid remark you just made.

Mr. Andre: I was in opposition a long time and I know the disputes that occur in opposition. I know that frequently in opposition the only thing you can unite on is opposition to the government.

I would ask the New Democratic Party, after their four-hour caucus where, figuratively, there was blood on the floor, to please recognize that what is at stake here is the best country in the world. I ask them not to put this best country in the world in jeopardy by their partisan concerns and their inability to come together as a party.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to make a very long statement. Nevertheless, I want to express my opinion on third reading of this bill, which is meant to give us a very useful tool in Canadian society, a way to consult the people on something as important as the Constitution.

Mr. Speaker, you should know that in April 1991, our party was the only one that had studied the problem thoroughly and had the courage to submit a comprehen-

sive plan to Canadians to resolve the constitutional crisis which today needs to be resolved as soon as possible because the public is sick and tired of talking about the Constitution.

[*English*]

We decided as a party in April of last year to make a nine-point proposal. When the minister got up in the House yesterday, I was happy to realize that the nine-point proposition that had been submitted by our party, plus the process, has been accepted by the government. In fact we are on the last item of the process, which is the referendum.

Why did we suggest the referendum? It is because the Constitution of the land belongs to the people. That is a very simple proposition. For years we have debated this problem and we see it again at this moment. People are using this occasion to try to bargain something for themselves. When you really talk to the people of the country, they ask why.

This country should have a Constitution. It is very important but it cannot be the only problem we face from now on. It is very convenient for this national government and provincial governments to talk about the Constitution but when you go to the people, they do not want to hear about the Constitution. They want to hear about jobs, economic growth and social improvements. When they open a newspaper all they see is the Constitution. As a politician, when you make a speech on the economy, the press is there talking about the Constitution.

We are all fed up with that. We know that when the Constitution is in the hands of the people, it will be very difficult for any level of government to use the Constitution as a scapegoat instead of talking about the real problems of the nation.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

• (1100)

Mr. Chrétien: We did not propose a referendum for a deadlock-breaking mechanism. That has never been our intention. Whatever the result of these negotiations, we have to go to the people. We have to give the Constitu-