

changes we need because we will have the power in Canada to make those changes when we need them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Order, please. The hon. member for Edmonton South (Mr. Roche) on a point of order.

Mr. Roche: Mr. Speaker, I thought the hon. member had finished his peroration. I wanted to ask him a question.

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Speaker, I shall be very pleased indeed to answer the hon. member's question.

I think we have seen that a number of myths have been perpetrated and a number of fantasies have been spread around this House and other places about what the west really wants. I think it is time we dispelled those myths and realized there is just as much a commitment among western Canadians to the position stated in this resolution as there is in other regions of Canada.

Evidence of this is supplied to me daily from western Canada. Just this week someone told me he did not realize how much of a federalist he was until he heard the premiers speak. Westerners are really saying that they are prepared to make the federalist choice—to make a choice in terms of what they see as a necessity for their own region to develop through strong, effective, central government and to use that strong, effective, central government to provide some degree of sharing of its resources and its opportunities with other Canadians.

There are also westerners who have not given up on the ideal of equalization. They still believe this country is based upon the notion of equality of opportunity and they are not prepared to abandon that.

An hon. Member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Axworthy: Hon. members opposite say that is not so, Mr. Speaker. I do not know what conference they were watching in September. If there is all the agreement with equalization and bills of rights and repatriation that hon. members opposite have indicated, why are they opposing this resolution? If there is all that agreement, then why are they opposing it? Do they have principles or do they not? Do they believe in what they say or do they not? If they say they agree with all those items, then why do we do not have the vote tonight, get the resolution passed and go to England as soon as possible? What are we waiting for, if there is this consensus and agreement? Are they simply interested in using this debate for some degree of political posturing?

I suspect there is no problem of unity in Canada, Mr. Speaker. But there is a problem of unity in the Tory caucus. They do not know what they believe in and they do not know where they belong, because there is no agreement among members of that caucus. Their only tactic is to attack. Let them state what they believe in. I would be very interested in hearing them. What kind of constitution do they want? They have been very good at saying what they are against, but what are they for?

The Constitution

There is a line in the play "The Rainmaker". When the evangelical preacher is on his feet holding forth, someone tells him he is so busy being right, he forgets what is good. I suggest that hon. members opposite are so busy being right that they forget what is good for this country.

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Finally, it comes down to the fact that this is not a debate between the federal government and the provincial governments. Governments are simply a means to an end. They are simply mechanisms for achieving goals and values for people. They are simply a way of trying to provide basic values for what we want to achieve in this country. Rather than degrading this debate into a great federal-provincial clash, what we should be talking about is what it means for the individuals of this country. What does it mean for people in this country? What will this resolution do for women who have been denied their rights for many, many years in this country? How will the entrenchment of a bill of rights make sure that when they go to court to get equality or when they try to get a proper definition of their rights before the courts they will have some protection under the law?

What does it mean for individuals in this country who want to make sure they can work wherever they live, because they are Canadian, and are not disbarred from working simply because they do not happen to be an inhabitant of one province or another. There are many people who want to see in our constitution not some abstract piece of theory, not something politicians just talk about, but the real nuts and bolts of their daily lives. It means restructuring our foundations so that we will have the powers to begin to provide for the effective management and growth of our economy.

There was an interesting sort of trio who all agreed that the federal government at the present time does not have enough power nor does it have the levers required to do the job it has to do, namely, the economic council, Joe Clark and Jacques Parizeau. None of those can be considered to be a Liberal adherent, from what I can tell, yet they all agreed the federal government at this point does not have the ability to govern and manage in the way it should. I agree with those statements and that is why we need to go back to some fundamentals as to how we change our constitution. I think, Mr. Speaker, we should ask that question about what kind of government can best serve the demands and needs and necessities of Canadians over the next several decades and get away from the picayune technicalities, which we can deal with in committee, and come back to some fundamental questions on the principles of constitutional change. If we can do so, I think this Parliament will have served very well its purpose of helping this country to make a choice about how it is going to govern itself in the future, and how it will provide a framework of government to give it the ability to be the kind of country we all want it to be.

Mr. Roche: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the minister a question. He built his case on the need for an entrenchment of a charter of rights around the report of what he called an Alberta social scientist who produced a study showing that