

Mr. McGrath: I reject that, Mr. Speaker. I believe the federal nature of Canada will ultimately be destroyed if we persist.

I have a few minutes left, Mr. Speaker. I have had to search my soul, as have we all, because whether we think the process is legitimate or not, we are involved in it. We must ask ourselves what is the bottom line? We must ask ourselves what is the least we will accept? All right; the government refuses to reroute the charter back to the provinces where the atmosphere, because of the climate in the country, I suggest is such that you would get agreement. The government refuses to do that and I must live with that. I hope my children's rights will be protected.

It bases the amending process on the Victoria formula, so it will not budge from that. It must go into the package. There is one part of the package that, as a Canadian having a dedication to my country as a whole and a responsibility to my province as a unit, I reject outright, and that is the concept that the Government of Canada can at any time declare a deadlock and do an end-run around the provincial legislatures of this country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McGrath: I reject that because it denies my province the rights we thought we were enshrining in our Constitution in 1949; that is, while we could be part of the greater nation of Canada we could still continue to maintain our political and cultural institutions within the federal system of Canada. That is the point which must be made. That is what is being denied us today.

There are none of us in the House who have an edge on patriotism or love of country. Indeed, somebody can say patriotism is the last refuge of this country. I make no excuse for the fact that I love this country. But equally, I love my province. I believe I have a responsibility to my province and if I fulfil and carry out that responsibility I am being a good Canadian and a good member of this federal nation of Canada. We must all carry out that responsibility to our provinces.

I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that my bottom line—and I say this to the people of Newfoundland and I will probably find myself in disagreement with the Premier of Newfoundland—is that if this package goes out of this Parliament with all its objectionable features I will suggest to the British Parliament, as a Canadian, “Hands off!”

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McGrath: The British Parliament has had its study. It knows what its constitutional position is, and it knows what are its constitutional responsibilities. But it has no business in examining a measure placed before it under a constitutional amending formula by a sovereign, independent and proud country. I will say this, Mr. Speaker; they did not ask for it. We have no right to send this package to Britain until the

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Supreme Court of Canada has had an opportunity to rule whether it is constitutional.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McGrath: To do so would run the risk of the national shame and embarrassment of having the Parliament of Great Britain reject a measure placed before it by the majority of the votes of the Parliament of Canada.

Finally, I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that if the government's majority has its way and obtains its amending referendum formulas, which will make the provinces and legislatures mere municipalities in terms of their relationship to the federal government, no province in Canada which holds to the position that the process is illegitimate and, hence, unconstitutional, and that the amending formula is ultra vires of the provincial constitutions, should have to accept this package. In my opinion any province could legally hold that the Government of Canada which tries to do an end-run around any provincial legislature could say, “No dice, it does not apply to us.”

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McGrath: That is the kind of Canada, the kind of division and the kind of future this government, by its unilateral action, has mapped out for itself. I hope this debate will be allowed to continue, Mr. Speaker.

I had a woman come to see me today because she discovered that the section protecting the denominational schools does not protect private schools in British Columbia.

● (1700)

As long as we can keep this debate going we can find and correct anomalies in the bill. My God, what is six months or a year compared to a constitution that is supposed to last us a lifetime? Remember, what we are doing here today is for the future of Canada. We must be very careful that what we do is done as well as we can to protect Canada, to protect the federal nature of Canada, because if we do not, Mr. Speaker, then the country is in for a long period of trauma, discord and chaos. For a country like Canada with such promise, with such a future, with so many important economic questions facing it today, that in my view would be a tragedy in the extreme.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[*English*]

SUBJECT MATTER OF QUESTIONS TO BE DEBATED

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 40, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: