

Supply

and all Canadians realize that, as do Quebecers. So they can go all they want. We are going to win this battle.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Duceppe: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I would like to make something clear. The time allowed is 20 minutes plus 10 minutes for questions or comments. There are questions or comments.

An hon. member: There are two minutes left.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): There are not two minutes left. I am sorry, but I kept track of the time very carefully. The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie on a point of order.

Mr. Duceppe: Madam Speaker, I would ask the House whether there is unanimous consent, as we did this morning when we agreed to let a member of the Liberal Party respond. We did it this morning with great generosity.

• (1625)

I imagine we in the House are feeling very generous, as the hon. member opposite just said, and will give the last speaker 30 or 45 seconds, as you did this morning, I think, to respond to the comments. I therefore ask for unanimous consent.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): The House heard the motion. Does the hon. member for Roberval have the unanimous consent of the House to respond?

Some hon. members: No.

[*English*]

Mr. Ted McWhinney (Vancouver Quadra): Madam Speaker, after the fire and brimstone of recent minutes, which reminded me of a Wagnerian opera performed by a travelling company in a provincial town, I would like to return to the subject of the debate, which is the motion moved by the leader of the Reform Party and the amendment moved by the leader of the government in the House. That concerns the issue of constitution making in our times and this issue of federalism.

I will come back to a point raised by the Reform Party which is a criticism of the government for a failure to define what the leader of the Reform Party has said, a constitutional program for the Quebec referendum.

There is a time when it is ripe for constitution making in any society but in the majority of times, it is just not simply right. The only successful ventures in constitution making occur in a period of national euphoria, a national consensus usually following on a great military victory or a great revolution. We have not had those in Canada and therefore changes have had to be

made on a basis of pragmatic incremental adjustment on a step by step basis. It has worked rather well.

A problem that is basic to the Reform Party leader's program is that there are, as President Franklin Roosevelt used to say: "Too many ifs there": if a certain party should win a certain election in a province, if it should then go on to a referendum, if it should then win a referendum, if it should then decide the majority is enough to ask for negotiations and if, finally, the other party should itself decide the numbers are sufficient to give credibility to the vote and to warrant negotiations in return.

It is a counsel of folly to suggest defining constitutional conditions for an iffy situation of this sort. A Constitution is as Mr. Justice Owen Roberts of the United States Supreme Court once said: "A constitution is not a railway excursion ticket good for one particular journey at one particular time and one particular place". The ideas you put forward have to have a long range currency.

One has the feeling that constitution making is being put forward as it was in the Mulroney era as a substitute for serious substantive thinking on economic matters. We want no more of the travelling circuses of Meech and Charlottetown. They were a failure and not the answer to the problems of the time.

If I may venture the critique of the Reform Party constitutional agenda, it is that there is an absence of a coherent overall vision. It seems to be a collection of ad hoc responses to a particular problem in which the deemed political advantage seems to be very high.

I noted and agreed with some of the criticisms made by the Reform Party on Bill C-18 but I deplore the total absence of substantive ideas on electoral reform which go to the core of the constituent process and are more important than the constitutional processes themselves.

I also wonder if the emphasis on the constitutionally acute proposals; referendum, initiative and recall do not disguise the absence of more fundamental thinking and depth on more fundamental issues such as the relationship between executive and legislative power and the need for a strong countervailing power, whether legislative or judicial, to the imperial executive that one is tended to have in Westminster derived constitutional systems today.

Finally on native Indian self-government I find enormous ambiguity that needs resolution and perhaps disguises political divisions within a party.

Let us return to the issue. What is the approach of the Liberal government on the Quebec issue? At this stage we can say there are some limiting parameters and these need to be said. The federal government has a totality of constitutional power to