

will say—and I unfortunately see too many of them—that no one needs Quebeckers and that they can separate if they want to. To all of them I say, “Come to Quebec, spend one week around Lake Saint-Jean or the North Shore, spend one week with one of our farmers, and you will see what it means to eat in French, to breathe in French and to live in French.” If there are still people who wonder what French Canadians want, I can tell them very simply that they ask for two things. If Canada is his country, the Francophone wants first of all to be heard in the courts of justice in French, from coast to coast. If Canada is his country, he wants to be able to send his children to a French school where numbers warrant it.

And if we do not stop hair-splitting about advertising and polls, we risk missing completely the basic issue of equal rights for everyone. Many of our villages and cities have already celebrated their tri-centennial and many can follow their roots to the beginnings of the colony. These same Canadian roots said No to separation.

Mr. Speaker, the resolution under consideration will protect the legitimate, and I insist on the word “legitimate”, and basic rights of the whole Canadian nation. We must therefore take advantage of the present crisis to re-think our country and rebuild it ourselves, otherwise, we shall leave a broken-up country to our children and grandchildren.

For more than 53 years, Mr. Speaker, we have been cleaning up the workings of the constitution. We can no longer afford to do so. The Fathers of Confederation paid their own debt 113 years ago and it is now up to us to pay our debt towards our country.

Mr. Speaker, my time is running out, but before closing I would like to tell members on both sides of the House about a point that I find very important. It concerns section 15 of the proposed resolution, which deals with the right to non-discrimination. That article lists various categories of people who should be protected, but I note that the handicapped had been omitted. I draw that omission to the attention of all hon. members and take this opportunity to ask for their support when the special committee of the House tables its preliminary report, in the very near future, and recommends that the handicapped be included in the bill of rights.

I close, Mr. Speaker, saying that I recognize that opinions differ but the objectives of the proposed resolution, those I enumerated at the start, convince me that our efforts will not be fruitless, provided we manage all of us to respect our Canadian tradition and history of justice, loyalty and sharing for the greater good of all Canadians.

● (1730)

[English]

Hon. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, this debate, which has ranged over just about two weeks, has reached a crucial stage. Indeed I would say that in the history of the evolution of Canada's constitution, this will probably,

The Constitution

without question of doubt, be judged by historians as a very sad day in the history of Canada.

Why do I say that, Mr. Speaker? We were served notice today that the government intends to invoke the rule of closure, not the reform kind of closure, if indeed 75C can be described in that way, which we have under our new rules, which themselves were brought in by the invocation of closure in 1968, but as my leader has said, the pipeline kind of closure, the C. D. Howe kind of closure. It is the kind of closure that no one ever expected this government to dare use again, especially on a debate concerning Canada's constitution.

We had received an invitation, given over the national networks of this country, by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) when he introduced this measure, that he expected members from every corner of the country to participate in this debate. Now, after only two weeks, after less than 20 per cent of the membership of this House has participated, less than one in five of us having had a chance to speak, tomorrow night, appropriately in the dark of night, in the early hours of the morning, the guillotine is to fall on this very important and historic debate on Canada's constitution.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. McGrath: Why is the government resorting to the invocation of closure? Why are ministers introducing closure in a debate on which there has been at least one consensus, namely, that it is a debate historic in its significance. I believe the reason the government is invoking closure at this stage of the debate, notwithstanding the fact that the motion before us calls for this debate to be in committee and back in the House before December 9, and that in itself is closure, the reason it is imposing this old-fashioned guillotine of C. D. Howe which does not provide for debate is because this measure cannot stand the scrutiny of public debate.

As my colleague has said, the people are catching on. Therefore it is important to the government, if they want to control their majority in this House and keep the traditional Liberal caucus discipline intact, to get this measure out of the House as quickly as they can. They know that once it gets off the floor of the House it goes into the relative sanctuary of the committee, which does not provide for input from all members of the House, but a relatively small number. It does not provide for the scrutiny of the television cameras or of the microphones of the radio and television networks of this country.

It is well that they would want to get it out of the House. They know that the longer it stays in the House, the more embarrassing it is going to be to the New Democratic Party who, today, sold their souls in support of a measure against which the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom) spoke so eloquently in this House just a few days ago. Yes, what a price they are paying.

I pity the New Democratic Party. During my parliamentary career I have had the greatest respect for the party of Tommy Douglas and J. S. Woodsworth and for its philosophic integrity, but I have lost that respect because today I have seen