

Government Orders

indicated that a discontinuance of the ferry service must be sanctioned by a constitutional amendment. We agree to that. She gave the House of Commons no direction as to the wording of that amendment in the form of a resolution.

If the government must go ahead with this change, and I repeat many of us feel this is not the way to go about constitutional change, it should reword its resolution to reaffirm the constitutional intent to provide constant communication with the mainland but to despecify the mode of transportation required. To be very clear, the amendment would promise a continuous link with the mainland, period.

In this way the government would have a free hand to choose the least expensive transportation option in the future while still carrying through with its plans for a bridge today.

Here the Government of Canada would not be committing all provinces to provide a fixed link for all time and at any cost, and under no circumstances could Canada be legally obliged to provide a bridge and a ferry service at the same time.

Although this legal argument is significant, it does not form the basis of our objection to this resolution. Our objection springs from a root that goes far deeper than a simple legal technicality. The Constitution of Canada defines the relationship between provinces and the federal government. The amending formula is the way to redefine or to change these relationships. If we redefine these relationships we must be careful to do so in a way that shows consideration for all parties. We show consideration to all parties in order to preserve good will between them. Countries are not built on technicalities. They are built on relationships. Those relationships, especially in this period of Canada's history, must be preserved at all costs or the federation is lost.

The Reform Party of Canada envisions a better process for our nation, one that preserves national relationships and respects the wisdom of individual Canadians, one that provides popular ratification of constitutional change in a bottom-up process, not a top-down process like we are experiencing here again today, in which each concerned Canadian can participate in constitutional conventions and finally have their say through a referendum.

This government is proceeding today just as it might have 50 years ago when it would simply pass a resolution to ask Britain to change the BNA Act. This process is no longer acceptable to Canadians.

I think of the case of the Roman Empire. At the start of every major undertaking they would pray to the god Janus. Janus was a two faced god who looked into both the past and the future. They hoped to be guided by this god who would say: "These are the

mistakes we made in the past and we will not repeat these as we try to guide our nation forward into the future".

• (1255)

That god passed into the history books along with the Roman Empire but we can learn from that concept. When it comes to constitutional change, if we ignore what we have gone through in the past few years as we plan for the future, we are making a serious mistake in the House of Commons.

The Canadian voter is no longer tolerant of politicians who fall victim to what we describe as Ottawa fever as soon as they are elected. This disease results, as we have talked about before, in selective hearing, poor memory and the inability to discern the common sense of average Canadians. Ottawa fever killed both a government and a national party just a few months ago. Has this government learned from the mistakes of the Conservatives?

I have a genuine fear that this House and this government are embarking on a legislative program, including these constitutional changes, that shows that they have the early symptoms of Ottawa fever.

The finance minister talks about filling the loopholes and broadening the tax base in the upcoming budget. He puts a pretty spin on an ugly subject by saying that Canadians want to increase equity in the tax system, which is just another way of saying that the government wants more out of the taxpayers. This is at a time when taxpayers are pleading with the government to stop gouging them and start listening about cutting some expenses.

On another issue, many voters, especially the voters of Markham—Whitchurch—Stouffville, are demanding the right to recall MPs but their appeals fall on deaf ears. We cannot see any movement on this right to recall. Why is that? Why is it that no one is listening to that?

Now we see this government promising also an ill-defined aboriginal self-government even after the Charlottetown accord was soundly rejected by Canadians. How is that possible?

This government is running far ahead of the voters. It may even be in a different running lane, I am not sure. The House needs to stop pushing only the government's agenda and start pushing ahead with the people's agenda.

Is it any wonder Canadians have a negative attitude toward governments in general? If the government will not listen to Canadians and cannot put its financial house in order, how will it possibly deal with wisdom regarding constitutional issues which form the foundation of that house?

The Constitution has been the focus of much needless hurt in our nation. It started with the patriation in 1981, a unilateral action which caused the rancorous constitutional conferences of the mid-eighties. These led to the political disasters of Meech Lake and the Charlottetown accord. Out of them emerged the