

which would ensure our prosperity for the future. But it is not being resolved. In fact, in this constitutional provision it is being totally ignored. If we had constitutional changes and reforms of that kind before this House, we would see great co-operation from members like myself, since that is what we need.

We need the kind of constitutional changes which will permit development of Canada, which will permit people on the east coast to develop the economy and resources which exist for the betterment of the people. Instead we are faced with a constitutional provision that guarantees equalization. It guarantees the same kind of federal hand-outs that have been received in the past, which have done nothing for the area and which have only maintained us in our poor economic state. At the same time the Government of Canada ignores those kinds of constitutional changes which would guarantee economic progress on the east coast, particularly in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland.

One must ask: Where are the real interests of the government? Is it really trying to change things in Canada or is it just sloughing off its responsibility? Is it creating a constitutional argument, a constitutional debacle which will take people's minds off real concerns, which will take us away from real solutions to the problems and we will simply become a debating society with no purpose, no objectives and no goals?

I think it is a shame, Mr. Speaker, that we in this House, and others elsewhere across the country, must enter into a constitutional debate. Many people have said this to me time and time again. All I can say is that it was not of the making of the Progressive Conservative Party. We believe in constitutional change and reform. But we believe in a Canada that involves the provinces and the people of Canada in the decision-making and which does not simply force upon people something which members of this House could not possibly know whether or not Canadians are willing to accept.

I have mentioned several times that many Canadians have joined in this constitutional debate. I want to honour Mrs. Norah C. Biron, of Green Cove House, Shore Road, Port Maitland, Nova Scotia. She wrote what I think is a very instructive letter to a Halifax newspaper. She comments on the constitutional proposal and indicates a genuine perplexity with the attitude of the Prime Minister with respect to constitutional reform and change. In her letter to the editor she quotes the Prime Minister as saying:

Policitors who spend their time and energy complaining about the Constitution are simply trying to find excuses for not doing as good a job as they should. Canada's real problems are not constitutional ones but concern housing shortages, the cost of living and other social problems; those who blame the Constitution for their troubles are deluding themselves in thinking that constitutional changes alone will work some sort of miracle on this continent.

Mrs. Biron was quoting what the Prime Minister said in 1967. She asked in her letter what he is saying now. He apparently has changed his tune. He apparently thinks that changes in the Constitution will result in a better Canada. Well, I do not agree with him. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, he is wrong with respect to a great many of these provisions. He may be wrong on the enshrinement of the so-called legal

The Constitution

rights. If he were to consult with Chief Justice Berger of the Supreme Court of the United States he would be told that there is a reign of terror in U.S. cities and that it is related to the constitutional provisions. I can say that because I worked for five years in legal aid. I have defended many criminal offenders, many of whom were charged with murder. I know that at this stage of our development it is highly questionable whether we ought to be giving more rights to criminal offenders in this country than they now have, bearing in mind the reign of terror that Chief Justice Berger says exists in the United States of America and its principal cities. If hon. members do not believe me, they should take a walk through New York City some night.

● (1740)

There are provisions for handicapped persons. I stood in this House under Standing Order 43, and asked the government to change the constitutional provisions to provide for handicapped persons. I wonder if the government really knows what that involves. Is it prepared to finance, for the provincial governments, the programs and the educational system which handicapped persons need? Handicapped persons may have learning disabilities, for example, and they are being denied special training programs. Will the government on the other side of the House really help handicapped persons, or will it merely put a few words into a sterile constitutional provision?

I said I welcomed the opportunity to speak on the constitutional proposal which is before this House and the people of Canada. I hope that by now the people of Canada recognize the true intent of this constitutional proposal and recognize that without the consent and concurrence of the provinces and without the consent and concurrence of the people of Canada it will be a meaningless exercise, a sterile provision which will not help anyone and will cause great division and distortion in the country. Of course the blame will lie at the feet of the Prime Minister of Canada.

Mr. Gordon Gilchrist (Scarborough East): Mr. Speaker, there are times when I wonder about the intelligence, the sense of duty, the motives and even the loyalty of people who are elected to membership in this House of Commons, which is part of the Parliament of the world's most blessed and beautiful of countries, our Canada. I wonder about their sense of devotion to a country with a proud history, which needs no apology, and a magnificent future, which needs, not meddling, but planning.

I wonder about the quality of Members of Parliament who sit here complacently watching escalating inflation beset our senior citizens and breadwinners, watching our students graduate to unemployment levels where only one in every seven is able to find work, watching our Canadian dollars flow out of the country to pay oil workers in Venezuela and Mexico and to help those countries to become rich at our expense, and watching this government neglect the research and scientific and technological development of the world's richest nation so that our main source of jobs and revenue is through the sale of