

Canadians want to vote on the Constitution and they want their Constitution to reflect all parts of the country. A Constitution that does not have the support of the majority of people in each region is useless. What is the point of a Constitution that the people of Atlantic Canada disagree with? What is the point of a Constitution if the people of Quebec feel that it is being shoved down their throats?

If the federal government does not agree to the principle of regional vetoes people will view the process as being irrelevant, and that is the last thing we want.

A referendum is the ultimate form of consultation. Members in this party hope that the government will be more forthcoming in consulting Canadians than it has been in consulting the opposition parties.

From this side it seems that the Prime Minister's idea of consulting is deciding what he is going to do and then telling us about it later.

It has been a year since the government first mentioned the possibility of a national referendum. Instead of starting the legislative process back then it has waited until the last minute before throwing this bill together. The result is a bill of holes that could jeopardize the success of the entire round of constitutional negotiations.

Liberal members want to be constructive. We criticize the government's bill in the hope of making it better for Canadians. We realize the government has the majority and it will probably have the last say. But in the interest of fairness and in the interest of all Canadians who want to keep this country together please listen to what we have to say.

There are ways to improve the bill. All 27 million people in this country want to reach a settlement of our Constitution and a national referendum is the way.

I certainly believe, as I have indicated, that the opposition parties must be consulted more to come up with the proper question. I believe we must have a double majority, that is regional majorities and a total majority over all. It could be financed if people were given tax credits for donations made to either yes or no in the referendum. I believe that the sunset clause should be removed because this means the legislation dies within three years. Now is the time to bring the

### *Government Orders*

Constitution to the people and every time we wish to make a change it should be brought to the people.

You are aware, Mr. Speaker, of the disastrous result of the last federal election campaign. We ended with a government which was elected to a large extent by third party spending. We are now experiencing the results of the agenda of that government.

Let us not go through the same mess with this constitutional referendum. Let us control third party spending and be sure that we have a fair result. Of course, as I indicated before, it must be national. The referendum also should be mandatory. The only way it can be of any success is to have a referendum and let the people have a say and then if each region and the majority vote yes, possibly we can put this constitutional issue to rest for a good period of time. Hopefully that will be the result.

If the government will accept a few of the recommendations from the opposition and the people in general then, hopefully, we will come up with success.

**Mr. Ken James (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Labour):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak on Bill C-81, an act to provide for referendums on the Constitution of Canada. It might be a surprise to all Canadians that someone is going to stand up and speak positively about the referendum. I have heard an awful lot of rhetoric from members in the House about people being positive about a referendum but then making a lot of negative comment. It is something the government has talked about for a period of time.

I recall an excerpt from the throne speech of May 1991 which said:

In September, my government will refer its proposals to a joint parliamentary committee that will be established to consult with Canadians.

After receipt and consideration of the committee's report, my government will propose a plan for a renewed Canada. You will be asked to approve enabling legislation to provide for greater participation of Canadian men and women in constitutional change.

Also I would like to read an excerpt from the Beau-doin-Dobbie committee report of February 1992:

We recommend that a federal law be enacted to enable the federal government, if deemed appropriate by the Government of Canada, to enable the federal government at its discretion, to hold a consultative referendum on a constitutional proposal, either to confirm the existence of a national consensus or to facilitate the adoption of the required amending resolutions.