

The Constitution

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lang: The process has been a gradual one. But the forces who advocate Quebec separatism did not spring up overnight either. And when the final vote was tallied on the night of May 20, it was clear that we had a job to perform. To dilly-dally any longer on the question of constitutional reform would have been a fatal error. There are times for compromise and negotiation, and there are times for action. This is a time for action pure and simple.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lang: But that is not the only reason we must proceed quickly. As the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chrétien) pointed out in his very eloquent address, we must act now in order to provide the momentum for further reform. Canada has far too much economic potential as a nation to let it be continuously stalled and sidetracked by an unending process of constitutional negotiations. The purpose of this constitutional resolution is to remove the doubt, the uncertainty and the deadlock that have plagued past constitutional talks. This demands leadership and leadership demands courage. The Liberal party lacks neither, Mr. Speaker, so to conclude, I would like to ask the members opposite to leave go their doubts, their fears and their divisiveness. No constitution is perfect. But however perfect or imperfect the constitutional resolution before us is, all members of this House must recognize that a constitution is an act of faith—faith in the Canadian people, faith in the generations of Canadians who will carry on in the spirit of tolerance and equity that has largely characterized our past, and will hopefully characterize our future.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order! order! order! In accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 33—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In accordance with the provisions of—

Mr. Wenman: Mr. Speaker, I demand the right to be heard.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wenman: Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I demand my right to be heard. I—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Cossitt: Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Cossitt: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Wenman: I demand the right to be heard here. I will not sit down until I have been heard.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, order!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wenman: I demand protection from this House of Commons. I demand from the Governor General of Canada—I demand to speak now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Order, please!

Mr. Wenman: I demand my right to speak and I am going to speak. The Bill of Rights of Canada is being—this is a mockery. It is a mockery, Mr. Speaker, because of the very bill that we discussed. I demand that we have the freedom to speak in this House. This is a hypocritical bill. My right is being denied to me—not only my right but the right of everyone who has spoken in this House. Mr. Speaker, I demand my right. I will not be seated until I have been heard.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The House will recognize the hon. member for Pembina (Mr. Elzinga) on a matter of privilege. The hon. member for Pembina on a question of privilege.

Mr. Peter Elzinga (Pembina): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I demand on behalf of myself and my colleagues the opportunity to participate in this debate. We have a responsibility to those individuals who have elected us and I wish to exercise that responsibility.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Elzinga: The Prime Minister gave a commitment in his news conference that all us members of Parliament would have an opportunity to participate in the discussion on our constitution. He has reneged on that promise.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I invite hon. members to be seated. I am hearing one member on a question of privilege and surely courtesy to their colleague requires that they allow the hon. member I have recognized to have the floor. Would the others please be seated? I am recognizing the hon. member on a question of privilege. Surely his colleagues will at least extend that courtesy.

Mr. Elzinga: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Prime Minister in his conference indicated that all members of Parliament would have an opportunity to participate in this debate. It is obvious that we who come from all those parts of Canada other than central Canada feel a basic need to speak in this