

Supply

changes I have mentioned are mere policy matters. Others would be more serious constitutional changes at some point.

I remind all members, in conclusion, that all serious constitutional change, all constitutional change, anything that would significantly change in our federation the status of any citizen or any province requires respect for democracy, for the Constitution and for the rule of law. It is not compatible with unilateral or illegal actions. I expect that as we debate our future in the next few months that the expectation of all Canadians will be that we continue to function in the context of a constitutional democracy and we will all respect the rule of law.

• (1300)

Mrs. Jane Stewart (Brant): Madam Speaker, I just have to say how baffled I am by the fact that this motion is being presented on the floor of the House today.

My goodness, over the course of the election campaign that we just fought the only thing I agreed with the Reform opposition was the fact that the Canadian people are tired of discussions about unity and the Constitution. Yet here in the House the Reform Party presents the motion to us.

More and more I am aware of confusion. I hear the Reform Party saying: "We are against the process, the top down approach that this government is taking". Yet as we take the approach of reviewing our social safety net that is inclusive of Canadian people, that encourages them to come and debate with us, they say: "That is not good enough. We want strong and firm action. The government must take action in this regard". I do not understand the difference.

In his speech the hon. member talked about the difficulties we face with approaching group dynamics and looking at people as groups. Yet in their motion, the Reform members talk about diversity. To me diversity means understanding individual differences, talking about those differences and knowing that by encouraging parts and bringing them together as a sum we get far greater results in the whole.

I am very confused by the motion. The hon. leader of the third party talks about a new Canada. My God, what is wrong with the Canada that has grown and developed over the last 127 years, a Canada of compassion and generosity?

The member talks about debt and deficit. I thought the member had seen the light, had seen that there are important additions to governing a country, not only the importance of debt and deficit management but the importance of issues that face individual Canadians as human beings. I thought he had seen that light. Yet we go back to that same old conversation. I am confused, totally confused.

Mr. Harper (Calgary West): Madam Speaker, I would agree strongly with the hon. member that she is confused. In fact she is so confused that I was barely able to understand the last half of that intervention.

However I will comment on the initial point which I think was important, and that is the issue of constitutional change and when and how we should pursue it.

Our party did say during the election campaign, as did the government, that Canadians were not interested in discussions of comprehensive constitutional change at this time. I would certainly agree with that. I think our priorities should be elsewhere.

Unfortunately we have to face the reality we have here. We have a party in the House which day after day is talking about the most dramatic and wide-ranging constitutional changes possible and that is the disintegration, separation, division, redivision of the federal state into two completely separate states, one which would presumably be a unitary state in Quebec and the other which as yet is undefined.

We hear this daily. We are heading into an election in Quebec where this will be an issue. Of course the separatists do not want to describe this as constitutional change because they realize it would immediately raise in the minds of the population of Quebec all the complexities and difficulties that are involved in that. The fact is that Quebecers are going to be asked very shortly to discuss constitutional change once again and to discuss it in the context of all the problems that exist with federalism.

We recognize those problems are there. We advocate some solutions to them. I am merely pointing out in my statement that we do have some constitutional perspectives here. We also have some things we would like to change about the country that can be pursued outside the constitutional framework.

The whole purpose of the motion while obviously not entering into constitutional negotiations is to raise the fact that there are alternative constitutional perspectives, including reforming ones, that do not require the kind of upheaval that separatism would entail.

• (1305)

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East): Madam Speaker, in Canada, indeed around the world, the common element that joins all human beings is that of our environment. We cannot avoid consuming air and water as we sustain our lives. All elements of our environment impact positively or negatively on these two essential ingredients of life.

As I travel throughout my constituency, the people who are most interested in the issue of the environment are young people. Going from school to school I can count on the fact that