

It does not take too much interpretation to see that the Leader of the Opposition is suggesting that giving the provinces at long last a formal and essential role in amending our Constitution, which this resolution does will result in our country falling apart. I must say that if the Leader of the Opposition thinks Canada will come tumbling down because the provinces are at last formally involved in all future amendments to the Constitution, then indeed he has but scant faith in the integrity of Canada or the degree of commitment of the provincial governments to the concept of Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Chénier: The Leader of the Opposition says that we must try again and again to achieve the impossible.

Mr. Blenkarn: Why don't you try?

Mr. Chénier: He feels, in advancing his doctrine of naive and weakened federalism—

Mr. Blenkarn: You know, you might get an agreement.

Mr. Chénier:—that it is only because the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) does not give in to every demand of the premiers that we have failed to attain an agreement with the provinces on an amending formula.

An hon. Member: Thirty five per cent.

Mr. Chénier: He says it is the Prime Minister, and not the system, who is to blame for the 54 years of impasse in obtaining patriation.

Mr. Blenkarn: It was certainly his for the last 12 years.

Mr. Chénier: He, not the Prime Minister—and I would surmise that the hon. member over there who loves to attack our native people in Canada is also an agent of divisiveness and disintegration—is prepared to see Canada—

Mr. Taylor: Aren't you a Canadian?

An hon. Member: Take your head out of the sand.

An hon. Member: Quebec will remember you.

Mr. Chénier:—become a land where, by crossing provincial boundaries, a person may lose or gain basic rights.

Mr. Blenkarn: That is absolute nonsense.

An hon. Member: Are you talking about yourself?

Mr. Chénier: I see some members on the other side must have imbibed Mr. Reagan's liquor tonight.

An hon. Member: Didn't the government supply that?

Mr. Chénier: As the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Broadbent) points out quite perceptively, if it had been Donald Duck—

An hon. Member: Donald Duck?

The Constitution

Mr. Stollery: Why don't you shut up?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The parliamentary secretary has the floor.

Mr. Nielsen: He should be careful about what he says.

Mr. Chénier: If it had been Donald Duck proposing the resolution before us, there would not be the level of agitation from the ranks of the Tory opposition or the dissenting premiers.

I am confident that if we can skim off the froth of bitterness from the Tory position in this debate, we will see that they, too, see the great merit and worthiness of the task at hand. We heard some of their members mention that to the Young Conservatives two weeks ago. Others said it outside the House on a Friday evening, also about two weeks ago.

Mr. Nielsen: Groucho.

An hon. Member: Thirty five per cent.

Mr. Chénier: We know that they do support patriation and the charter of rights as well as the other provisions in the resolution. I do not believe their fears about this resolution are justly founded. They have taken a position that is impossible to reconcile with reality, but that is their problem and they will have to deal with it in the future.

An hon. Member: What did Pearson say?

Mr. Chénier: My only wish is that they could have put the interests of all Canadians ahead of their difficulties as a political party.

Mr. Taylor: Look who is talking about the west.

Mr. Chénier: I do not want to dwell on the negativism of the opposition with regard to this resolution. I believe this is a time for celebration in Canada, not a time in which to incite divisiveness among our people. We have before this House a resolution which frees us from the enormous difficulties of determining our national will through the constitutional process and makes great strides toward creating a Canada which proudly states its belief in the integrity of the individual.

If we look beyond the criticism of the opposition and examine with fairness what is really being undertaken here, I believe all Canadians will agree that we are strengthening and preserving the Canadian tradition of mutual understanding and co-operation, not tearing this country asunder as the opposition would have us believe.

Mr. Taylor: I am a Canadian. I do not agree.

An hon. Member: Who says you are a Canadian?

An hon. Member: Everybody from Alberta is a Canadian. Don't you know that?

Mr. Chénier: Let me elaborate briefly on the provisions in this resolution.