

The Constitution

tion. It seems to me very arrogant to leave out a reference to God.

For those who say our society is changing, let us look at our multicultural mosaic today. Let us be reminded that those who come from the Islamic, Buddhist, Confucian or other religious backgrounds bring with them a concept of God which is not strange to their culture. Surely as we look at our roots and try to imbue our determination to protect rights, we need to go back. We need to go more slowly to see that the premise on which we build is still maintained in the charter, in its preamble, or wherever.

When we resume in the time remaining I wish to continue discussion about our rights. I want to reflect upon a most significant meeting, held here in the nation's capital last week when over 1,000 women were present. I want to reflect on the charter proposal and to reflect upon whether or not it will serve their interests. I want to reflect upon the proposals put to the government by the women of this nation. I want to reflect upon the growing concern of other groups across this country, including questions which have been raised in the media this day by the Canadian Council for Social Development, and as other groups begin to say "Slow down, do it right, do what you want to do."

If I may, Mr. Speaker, I will call it one o'clock.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): As suggested by the hon. member for Waterloo (Mr. McLeah), we will call it one o'clock.

It being one o'clock, I do now leave the chair until two o'clock this afternoon.

At 12.58 p.m. the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: When the House rose at one o'clock the hon. member for Waterloo (Mr. McLean) had the floor.

Mr. McLean: Mr. Speaker, before the lunch break, I was suggesting to the House that there is a need to recognize our Canadian tradition of dealing by consensus rather than unilateral action. We have a rich diversity which needs to be respected in all of its variations in the process of developing our charter. It is argued that Canada is difficult to govern under our federal system, that we need this unilateral action in order to become a changed nation. That flies in the face of modern technology, communication and transportation. Compared to other parts of the world, this nation is much more governable and these are not the problems they are painted.

● (1410)

I was also suggesting that the very essence of the proposals put forward is that they put the supremacy of government over and against the supremacy of the individual and the inalienable rights we have, and that the omission on the part of the government of any reference to God is symbolic of that shift toward the tendency of the government to decide rights rather than rights being given as a gift to us as part of our humanity.

I stated also that I wished to talk about the importance of the charter. We on all sides of the House should begin to realize that there is concern with respect to seeing that human rights are protected. At the moment the government has before it well-thought-out and articulated proposals which are the result of the conference held by the ad hoc committee of Canadian women here in Ottawa on February 14 and 15. We will be waiting to hear how the government will respond to the proposals and amendments recommended for inclusion.

Today another council, the Council on Social Development, said publicly that the charter of rights could be used to deny access to social services. This is another group which should be heard, and the concerns which are raised should be addressed in order that we can have a sense of unity with respect to the proposals before us.

In the context of this debate and as we deal with human rights, I want to say that our charter and package on human rights must do what we want it to do. The outcome of the committee meeting of women this past weekend was a clear signal from women that the entrenchment of human rights is something they want and affirm; but it should be done properly and the proposals now before the House and the nation are not good enough.

It is interesting that today in the question period the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chrétien) confirmed that very few additional proposals will be included. He seemed to indicate that the government intends to ram through its proposals regardless of the opinions of large sections of our nation and regardless of the opinions of the provincial governments.

Women have sent representatives to Parliament Hill to speak to every member of Parliament, despite the discouragement of the Minister of Justice. Over 1,000 were here for two days, and they want their views known. They are concerned that the Constitution committee did not travel and that women who do not have the financial base men across the nation have are handicapped and disadvantaged again in the matter of their ability to travel, to speak and to articulate their concerns.

The committee heard four or five representations or groups and received other submissions, but many of the 1,500 or more women's groups across the nation are only beginning to be aware of the implications of what is before us, as is the nation as a whole.

It is very interesting to me as one who was able to attend that meeting for two days, along with my colleagues, the hon. member for Vancouver Centre (Miss Carney), the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands (Miss MacDonald) and the hon. member for New Westminster-Coquitlam (Miss