

● (1730)

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Fraser: The members are not travelling now. They are sitting in Ottawa. If anyone thinks people in western Canada believe that Ottawa is listening to them, they are wrong.

Then there was the ridiculous time limit of December 9. After a tremendous battle, that was extended. This must be the strangest committee or joint committee which has ever been established. They voted to limit the number of experts on the subject being discussed who could appear before the committee. This has been a highly partisan debate. If anything, it has been a highly partisan structure.

Let us look at what the other place is doing. The Senate began its debate, because it is controlled by government members, before the House of Commons finished its debate. That is surely a most extraordinary bit of conduct on the part of the Senate.

Mr. Evans: It is not unusual at all.

Mr. Fraser: The hon. member says it is not unusual. I cannot imagine a debate on the fundamental laws of our country taking place here and proceeding at the same time in the Senate. That is incredible. The debate should have taken place here and then the Senate, exercising its prerogative, could have taken a look at what we had done.

Mr. Blais: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Fraser: You will have your chance to speak later.

Mr. Blais: The hon. member is suggesting that the joint resolution ought to be dealt with first in the House of Commons and then in the Senate, seriatim. Is he implying that in terms of the joint committee, of which he was a member, he wanted the Senators excluded?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): That is not a point of order.

Mr. Fraser: It is not even a good question. I will go down the list of the Senators from the province of British Columbia. Senator Bell was asked to vote on whether the senate should proceed while we were still debating. That Senator was not there. Senator Lawson said it was perfectly all right to go ahead with the debate. So did Senator van Roggen, Senator Williams, Senator Perrault and Senator Austin.

Mr. Evans: I rise on a point of order. Unless I am mistaken, I believe it is out of order to refer to proceedings currently going on in the other place.

Mr. Fraser: The hon. member just proved my point. Apparently we in this chamber are not allowed to make reference to what is going on in the other chamber because it is going on at the same time. You want to close us off with closure, close us off with no TV and radio, and time limits and now with a

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procedural rule, you put us in a Catch 22 position. The hon. member just proved the point I am making.

An hon. Member: We only get 20 minutes.

Mr. Fraser: Somebody on the government side says they only get 20 minutes. That is something worked out by their House leader. If they are complaining about the time they are allotted, they should complain to their own people.

Let me give another classic example of the partisanship which existed. What happened on the question of property rights? The committee was clearly promised by a minister of the Crown that a property rights amendment by the Conservative party would be allowed. That was overruled a few days later. If anyone wants to know how partisan this has been, they can look at the words of the Prime Minister when speaking in Vancouver. Despite all the efforts of the NDP, even though they were misguided, to try to co-operate with the government, the Prime Minister said this:

"We've managed to split the NDP right down the middle between those who love freedom and justice more and the Liberals less . . . and those who hate Liberals more and love freedom and justice less".

An extraordinary statement in an editorial in the *Winnipeg Free Press* said:

That statement stinks of everything that is wrong with Mr. Trudeau's approach to the Constitution: its arrogance, its narrow partisanship and its sheer dishonesty.

I think I made the point that the debate on this resolution started off in a partisan manner. It has maintained a considerable degree of partisanship since. If this is going to be done by one party with a majority, rather than go through any kind of forum, it will be partisan. I am sorry if the public is upset about it, but the public ought to know why this is so.

What is the real issue in this debate? The issue is whether what we are doing is being done in the right way another, if so, is it the right answer. Mr. Justice O'Sullivan, one of the dissenting judges in the Manitoba case, said this:

—the Attorney General of Canada ends up in the proposition that a political party, if it forms the majority of both houses of the Canadian Parliament, has the power to amend the Constitution of our country as it pleases.

That was basically the position of the government lawyers in the court. In addition, it is the position in this, the highest court, with the vast majority of government speakers. Somebody referred to the province of Quebec and the promises made to that province during the referendum. Was that the promise made to the province of Quebec? I ask hon. members on the government side, especially those from the province of Quebec, whether that province was told during the referendum debate in that province that the federal government would come to the House of Commons and ask for the right to unilaterally change the Constitution of Canada? There is not a member in this House from the province of Quebec who can answer yes to that. They know the answer is no. Of course, Quebec was never told that. If that had been the basis of the campaign a few months ago to keep Quebec in confederation, the vote would have gone the other way.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): What did Ryan say?