

Government Orders

trade agreement, when we do not have free trade among our own provinces? I think these are the issues that need to be dealt with in a focused and clear fashion in this debate as it evolves.

• (0030)

My concern to this point has been that there did not seem to be any kind of organization or orchestration, perhaps choreography is the right word, about how this was going to unfold. The presentation of the resolution that we are debating now, forming a parliamentary committee to look at specific proposals and to consult with Canadians is a positive move. It gives some shape to what is happening, some hope that this is actually a process that has an end which will result in a product to which we can rally the support of Canadians.

Before I close, since it was the NDP who hoped that we would have real debate here, I would like to say in response to its suggestions today that I regret its position, that it cannot support the resolution because it does not contain a constituent assembly.

As I said to the member for Yorkton-Melville when he spoke earlier this evening, I understand where he is coming from on that issue. I hear some of the same voices, the same concerns of people that somehow the process has excluded them.

When I hear the proposals that the NDP make for a constituent assembly I am, first of all, concerned that it could not be completed in a timely fashion. Second, I am concerned about the notion that Canadians cannot be represented unless a member of their particular group speaks on their behalf. It concerns me to think that the implications of the suggestion of the NDP are that when I speak or vote in the House of Commons I do not do so on behalf of the women in my constituency, that I do not do so on behalf of the people of racial origins other than my own in my constituency. This does not make sense to me and I cannot understand why the NDP insists that elected representatives are inadequate to speak on behalf of the people who elected them, even though they may be different from themselves.

To take his case to an absurd conclusion I would say that, no matter what suggestion is made, children are under-represented. Are we to have children on the constituent assembly? Perhaps we should.

The other thing which concerns me is the implication that politicians are incapable of dealing with these important issues of the day. I accept much of the criticism that has been levelled against all of us, that we for some reason have lost the trust of Canadians. Frankly, I blame the government for a lot of that sentiment but that is not the point of addressing it tonight.

Canada is a country rich in democratic traditions. The cornerstone of those traditions is the fact that we elect our leaders from among our peers. Therefore, those elected to lead in Canada are of the best and the worst and the mediocre of our society. If we constantly harp on the worst then very soon the best will want no part of this process.

I plead with the people of Canada to give us all another chance. To give us the time to deal with these issues. We can find a solution. It will not be the solution that satisfies all 25 million Canadians. There will be dissent, there will be people who do not find their own solution in what comes out. However, for the sake of our country, for the sake of all that we have, let us not lose all those good things because we are unhappy with a few things.

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): I want to congratulate the hon. member. That was probably one of the most thoughtful speeches today. I think he put his finger on a number of concerns that we all feel in the House. I just wanted to add my congratulations.

He did get one shot in and I want to correct the record because it was one of the better speeches that I have heard in this House in a long time. He quoted the Prime Minister as saying that the Constitution was not worth the paper it was written on and asked what would happen if George Bush said that about the constitution in the United States.

There is a slight difference, and let us put it in context. The Prime Minister of Canada was referring to our Constitution in saying that if seven million Canadians are outside our Constitution, then it is not really worth the paper it is written on. That was the context in which was delivered. The difference is George Bush doesn't have one of his states of the union outside the constitution of the United States.

If the hon. member, in the mood of the speech that was given by him, which was excellent, would understand and in all fairness place when the Prime Minister said