

Sir John A. Macdonald

Second, Mr. Speaker, they believed that under a system of majority parliamentary rule, which was to be the basis for government in this country, the majority could be strong only when the rights of the minorities were protected and safeguarded. In those days they had all of the minorities we have today—the religious minorities, political minorities, language minorities and economic minorities—but, most important of all, these men were dedicated to the fact that the basic minority was the individual. They believed that government neither had the right to give nor take away these rights; it had instead the responsibility to protect and perpetuate them.

• (3:20 p.m.)

It was on this basis that they found themselves able to come together to draft the first constitution. But even more important than either of those things, these men believed that Canada could only achieve these purposes, provide this way of life and remain united if she continued as a nation under God. In fact they gave Canada a motto, one which many of us have forgotten if ever we really knew it. It was simply "He shall have dominion from sea to sea", a quotation from Psalms. I suggest that any of us who want to remind ourselves of this fact could do no better than go up into the Memorial Room and see these words engraved in the glass of the beautiful windows of that room. We have only to read what is inscribed over the archway as we enter this building or see it written in abbreviated form on our coat of arms. These men believed that only in this way could Canada accomplish what was their objective and vision for this country.

Sir John A. Macdonald was dedicated to these principles, and he led the men of his day on this basis.

Rather than a new constitution today, more urgent is the need for us to rededicate ourselves to the spirit of our present constitution and the details of that tremendous constitutional document which I believe in the future will be regarded for its great worth even more reverently than it has been in the past or is at the present time. If we could live up to the spirit of that constitution many of the differences that divide us today could be put aside in favour of the great areas of agreement which I am sure we all have.

Today it is difficult for us even to come to agreement on an amending formula for the constitution of 1867. How much greater was the feat, then, of these men one hundred years ago in bringing together the entire

[Mr. Thompson.]

document and standing in agreement upon it. Yes, Mr. Speaker, we owe a great debt to Sir John A. Macdonald. We have many lessons to learn from the confederating fathers. There is no better way of doing that today than recalling, remembering and respecting the life of this great man. It is our nation, Canada, which today stands as his living memorial.

Mr. A. D. Alkenbrack (Prince Edward-Lennox): Mr. Speaker, I would not—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Is it the wish of the house to suspend the provisions of provisional standing order 15 (2) (a) to allow hon. members to make additional contributions to these comments.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Alkenbrack: Mr. Speaker, I would not be doing my duty as the representative of Prince Edward-Lennox if I did not rise at this time to support the many eloquent tributes that have been paid to the Lennox boy, the man whom we revere and recognize today, Sir John A. Macdonald, first Prime Minister of our country and at one time the representative in this house of the electoral district of Lennox.

I also would not be doing my duty to my constituents if I did not rise at this time to pay tribute to him, because in our part of Canada, the land of Macdonald, the land of the Loyalists, his memory is ever green and the principles for which he stood are still a force, and a strong one, in our principles of nationhood. This Lennox boy who roamed the fields of Adolphustown, which is one of the smaller rural municipalities of the province of Ontario, left his indelible mark upon the life of our area.

I recall and remind this house that on the south shore of Hay bay, in a rural setting close to the waters of that beautiful bay where the land was settled and developed by the Loyalists in 1785, there is a stone cairn marking the nearby spot where his father operated a farm in the early days of the life of the Macdonald family in Lennox. On that cairn there is a fitting tribute to this great man, which says:

It was from these fields that he drew the inspiration that enabled him to weld the scattered provinces into a nation from sea to sea.

I am very impressed today with the tributes paid by all hon. members to our first Prime Minister. I was reminded of another inscription when the hon. member for Red Deer mentioned the inscription on the front of the peace tower which is a fulfilment of