

In advancing these proposals the government has faced opposition from the official opposition and from a number of provinces. Obviously the government takes this opposition seriously. I can assure you it has affected the design of the package. But ultimately the government and a majority in parliament must act, confident that they are acting within their authority and that they are ultimately responsible to the Canadian people.

And this, of course, is the great difference between the British parliament and the Canadian parliament in these questions. The Canadian parliament must answer to the Canadian people. The British parliament does not. I believe this difference is absolutely fundamental and I would encourage every member of the British parliament to weigh its significance fully. Does the British parliament really wish to replace the parliament of Canada as the guardian of the federal institutions of Canada?

Some may reply that the British parliament clearly has the legal ability to pass or defeat a Canadian proposal. This may be true in the narrow, legal sense. But the Canadian government -- and, as I say, the British government -- insists that this narrow, legal right is, to use the term again, an "anachronism" which can only properly be used by passing "on the nod", without looking at the substance, any request from the Canadian parliament. To quote Viscount Jowett on an earlier request in 1940, "It is sufficient justification for the bill that we are morally bound to act on the grounds that we have here the request of the dominion parliament."

I recognize that the present constitutional anachronism creates an uncomfortable or embarrassing situation for some British parliamentarians. For us in Canada as well there is something strange about having to resort to the mechanisms of the British parliament in order to secure an amendment to our own constitution. Canada has long since won its sovereignty and its independence, in two world wars and through a process of constitutional development which in some ways at least could serve as a model for the world.

For both Canada and Britain it would be a tragedy to mar the shared history of that constitutional development at the very end of the process. To those British parliamentarians who may feel uncomfortable about the present situation, and especially to Sir Anthony Kershaw, let me only say this: You do not solve a problem in Britain