

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable the Deputy Governor General desires the immediate attendance of this honourable House in the chamber of the honourable the Senate.

Accordingly, Mr. Deputy Speaker with the House went up to the Senate chamber.

And being returned:

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that when the House went up to the Senate chamber, the Deputy Governor General had been pleased to give, in Her Majesty's name, the Royal Assent to the following bills:

Bill C-42, an act to establish the Canada Post Corporation, to repeal the Post Office Act and other related Acts and to make related amendments to other acts—Chapter 54;

Bill C-64, an act to amend the Auditor General Act—Chapter 55;

Bill S-17, an act to implement conventions between Canada and New Zealand and Canada and Australia for the avoidance of double taxation with respect to income tax—Chapter 56.

It being six o'clock, I do now leave the chair until eight o'clock this evening.

At six o'clock, the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE CONSTITUTION

RESOLUTION RESPECTING CONSTITUTION ACT, 1981

The House resumed debate on the motion of Mr. Chrétien, seconded by Mr. Roberts, for an Address to Her Majesty the Queen respecting the Constitution of Canada.

And on the amendment of Mr. Epp, seconded by Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton)—That the motion be amended in Schedule B of the proposed resolution by deleting clause 46, and by making all necessary changes to the Schedule consequential thereto; and on the notices of amendments of Messrs. Knowles, Baker (Nepean-Carleton) and Pinard.

Mr. Stan Schellenberger (Wetaskiwin): Mr. Speaker, before the dinner hour I was mentioning how we in my constituency and in western Canada particularly disagreed with the process. I suggested that if the Prime Minister wished to get agreement, it was possible. I pointed out how in the time of the Right Hon. John Diefenbaker there was agreement in respect of financing of education, under the Right Hon. Mr. Pearson there was agreement on medicare, and under the Right Hon. Joe Clark we were able to come to an agreement

The Constitution

on energy. It is too bad that for this nation we were not able to sign that agreement.

We constantly hear in the Prime Minister's argument about 54 years of failure. Let me refer to a little research I had carried out in respect of the last 54 years, and whether those 54 years could be considered a failure in terms of amendment to the Constitution.

In western Canada we certainly would not consider as a failure the conference in 1927, the start of the 54 years of which the Prime Minister speaks, because that was when we were first given legitimate rights to our resources. We spent some 62 days from 1927 to the present time at first ministers' conferences attempting to deal with amendments to the Constitution. From 1927 to 1931 we spent ten days dealing with the very important issue of returning resources to the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. That was a most important issue to us and an issue about which we are still concerned today.

In 1934 we spent three days altering the Criminal Code so that the province of Quebec could conduct lotteries. That was very important, I am sure, at the time. In 1941, two days were spent dealing with the Raoul Sirois report. I could go on and on. The next conference was in 1950 and dealt with old age security, tax agreements and the amending formula. In 1964, some 14 years later, we dealt with the 100th anniversary of the conference in Charlottetown and attempted to bring about a repatriation formula and an amending formula for the BNA Act. Again in 1968, when the present Prime Minister took over and began his attempt to deal with a number of issues including provincial control of social services, income support payments, unemployment insurance, workmen's compensation, retirement income and on and on, all of which were put before the first ministers of this nation, agreements were found when agreement was sought.

Surely the underlying point to this whole process is that ten to 14 years passed between each conference; premiers changed, prime ministers changed, attitudes in this country changed as society progressed, so how can one say that in the last 54 years we have met with failure in amending the Constitution when many amendments were sought and accepted?

In modern days we have failed under the Prime Minister, and I suggest the reason is that instead of putting issues before the premiers, an issue such as patriation alone, an amending formula alone, offshore rights or resources, the Prime Minister has always put the whole bag of tricks on the table. It is very difficult for premiers not to do their utmost to protect their interests. That is what they are elected to do. Again I must say, we find the problem is in respect of the process.

Surely if the Prime Minister wished to find an agreement, he could have put patriation on the table with an acceptable amending formula. In that way, I suggest, agreement could have been found. We could then have dealt at other conferences with the other issues until we reached substantive agreement, and then brought the resolution before the House.