

*The Constitution*

**Mr. McKinnon:** What a waste of talent, because he has considerable talent and he wasted much of it.

**Mr. Peterson:** I know! Should we abolish the electoral system in Canada?

**An hon. Member:** Don't talk from your seat. Stand up and talk.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. McKinnon:** The hon. member who speaks so often from a sitting position has not really contributed. I give the Prime Minister full credit for being one of the best and one of the slickest campaigners the country has ever seen.

If this resolution passes in its present form and the amended Constitution and charter of rights are patriated with the divisive amending formula included, that will be the Prime Minister's greatest failure. I can assure hon. gentlemen opposite that this country, this party and parties on all sides of the House really want to bring the Constitution home. Only a misguided genius like the Prime Minister could manage to have the country quarrel about how to bring it home when we all want that. He has managed to come up with the one way to alienate all of those people who desire it. I regret that and I look forward to the day when this country, not with this Prime Minister but with another, will be able to heal the grievous wounds the right hon. gentleman has left as his legacy.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Ray Chénier (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):** Mr. Speaker, we are engaged in a debate in this House which gives each member, that rarest of opportunities, the opportunity to participate in the conception and birth of the most basic and important statements of our nationhood: the Canadian Constitution.

Each of us represents a part of Canada, a collection of Canadians who together form the national will. We assemble in this chamber to make decisions which, we feel, after all due and proper debate, are in the best interest of the nation. We are here to do a job, mindful of the feelings of our constituents, but mindful also that they are but part of the Canadian family. One of the intriguing characteristics of Canada is that although this land is almost unimaginably vast, most of us have close relatives or friends in other parts of Canada. And we all know that we are essentially the same sort of people and that our acceptance of Canada as our enduring homeland is never questioned.

We are a population blessed with enormous wealth from our resources, both in industry and natural; a strong and proud democratic tradition; a belief that we should share the bounty of our land with those who do not enjoy its full benefit, and, above all, a population which has learned the lessons of

tolerance and understanding, and those lessons have been learned with some pain.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to participate in this historic debate to express vividly and clearly my support for the proposed resolution concerning a new Constitution, a truly Canadian Constitution. I believe that thanks to the efforts of the three parties this Parliament has been successful in drafting a text which all at once is noble, just and futuristic. It is without hesitation or fear that I will tell my voters and the rest of the Canadian people that parliamentarians are making a courageous and great stand in this debate. I know that the native people with whom I work more closely because of my duties as parliamentary secretary, as well as the disabled and the handicapped whom I met as a member of the Task Force on the Disabled and the Handicapped, understand the scope of the achievements contained in this resolution.

● (2040)

[*English*]

I support this resolution for many reasons, but I must mention one which surely is on the minds of all members, be they in support of it or in opposition to it. I fear that should we fail now, should we abandon the momentum built up after years and years of debate and indecision, we may fail completely and forever.

We have the duty to rise to the occasion, to look behind the narrow and selfish pressures besetting this process and see to it once and for all that we sever our final colonial links and grasp firmly the promise and challenge of the future.

I must confess that I am alarmed by the tactics and arguments advanced in this debate by members of the Conservative party who even have the gall to compare our democracy with that of the U.S.S.R.

**An hon. Member:** The same bill of rights.

**Mr. Chénier:** In particular, I find it extremely distressing that the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) has demonstrated quite clearly that he is prepared to sacrifice the tremendous achievements in this resolution in order to preserve his own political future. It is the Leader of the Official Opposition who has been racing about the countryside telling Canadians that this Constitution will mean the end of Canada. The desperate words he has used in making his case would be alarming were they not so misguided and self-serving.

Let me quote from the speech of the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition in this House two weeks ago. We must, of course, understand that the prospect of political mortality may have distracted rather than focused his thoughts. Nevertheless, what he said is on the record for all Canadians to see what the Leader of the Opposition feels about this resolution. He said:

The aftermath of the adoption of this resolution will have us looking around at the breaking of our federation and perhaps at the breaking of the nation itself.