

impose. But he never goes on to say what will happen if we do not have the agreement of seven provinces with 50 per cent of the population. It is a pig in a poke. It is unknown. In the ultimate analysis of the process put forward by the Conservative Party, one simply does not know what one is getting. It is a sincere point of view, sincerely expressed. It is not, I suggest, a view responsibly expressed.

The opposition yesterday, and I think throughout the debates of the committee, has really attacked the process by which we have sought constitutional reform, much more than the substance. They have described our efforts as "unilateral and divisive". It is always a surprise to me when people use the word "unilateral". I know sometimes it escapes members of the House, but words actually have a meaning. One can look them up if in doubt. "Unilateral" means imposed by one person or party. That is not what we are doing. We are proceeding with the support, I believe, of members in every political party in this House of Commons.

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

**Mr. Roberts:** We will proceed with significant support from the provinces. I believe, and the hon. member for Provencher has confirmed this in his remarks, that we are proceeding with a charter of rights which has the support of the people of Canada.

Of course, there are people who are unhappy with the process by which we have arrived at this position. I am unhappy with it. The Minister of Justice (Mr. Chrétien) is unhappy with it. We would all prefer to go with the support of all the provinces. We would have loved to do that. The reason we are proceeding in the way we are is that we recognize that that kind of support is impossible to achieve.

Nor is this new Constitution one which is being made, as was charged yesterday, by foreigners, by the Imperial Parliament, by Great Britain. This Constitution is being made in Canada. Indeed, it has the longest gestation period of any baby in public life, going back well over 50 years. It is being made by the members of this House of Commons in this debate and by the decisions they will take. It has been made by the past Members of Parliament in previous parliamentary discussions, by the work of at least two joint committees of Parliament which have assessed our Constitution, by the continuing participation of a whole host of interested groups who made their views known to the joint committee, and by the witnesses who appeared before it. The role of Great Britain in this process is a formal one, not the exercise of moral authority. It is rather like a notary who ratifies a contract or a civil authority which registers a marriage.

There has been much talk, I think wildly exaggerated, on the part of the opposition about the divisiveness of this process that we have gone through, about the strength of debate and discussion taking place in the country. That is not a source of divisiveness. It is not a source of weakness. It is a source of strength that in this country we freely, forcefully, frankly and passionately debate these views. I suspect there is no institution which expresses more strongly a conflict of views of

### *The Constitution*

various representatives than this House of Parliament, this House of Commons. The expression of those views in this manner is not divisiveness. It is a way in which we come to a conclusion and develop consensus for our policies.

It is now before the House of Commons. It is not the process, not the manner of arriving, but the substance. What we must decide is whether in our heart of hearts the substance of what is being proposed is what we want for Canadians and what Canadians want for themselves.

● (1630)

The official spokesman for the Conservatives has said they want entrenched rights, but not by this process, even though he believes an entrenched charter of rights has popular support. This is a serious matter, but perhaps once in a while we can look at serious matters lightly. I could not help but think yesterday that I was rather happy the hon. member for Provencher was not around when Moses came down from Sinai because he would have said: "Of course, we are all in favour of the Ten Commandments, but we think Moses went up the wrong mountain, took the wrong path or should have had someone with him and, in any case, all of the tribes should be able to opt out." That is a lighthearted view. I see by his smile that the hon. member appreciates that, but the point I want to make is that it is the substance on which the House must now pronounce. It is the question of whether we want these rights made legally enforceable for Canadians.

**Mr. Siddon:** We have those rights.

**Mr. Roberts:** The hon. member for Provencher addressed himself seriously to those questions yesterday. He spoke of the inalienable nature of rights. He regretted the omission of a reference to the divine sanction for rights. The hon. member for Fraser Valley West (Mr. Wenman) raised the same point a few minutes ago. The hon. member for Provencher sincerely, but falsely, misrepresented the government's effort, and I personally feel strongly about this because I was the representative of the federal government during our discussions at the federal-provincial conference who argued as strongly as I could for the inclusion of a preamble to the Constitution with explicit reference to divine majesty.

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

**Mr. Roberts:** It was the intent of this government to have those exact references in our Constitution. That is a matter of public record. That intent was made known last summer—July 1, to be exact, and I want to take a moment to read it. It contains five or six paragraphs, but I want to read it because it makes that point clear and also makes clear the expression of the idea of the Canada we are trying to achieve in these constitutional proposals. I will cite the preamble which we urged upon the provinces to include in this Constitution.

We, the people of Canada, proudly proclaim that we are and shall always be, with the help of God, a free and self-governing people.

Born of a meeting of the English and French presence on North American soil which had long been the home of our native peoples, and enriched by the contribution of millions of people from the four corners of the earth, we have