

single debate in the House, or again we could have refused to refer the matter to committee and disallow the third debate to which I have just referred and which will again enable members to voice their views and to consider the report already tabled by the committee. Finally, it will allow Parliament to approve our procedure which is to address a petition to the Queen and the British parliament asking them to return our constitution and allow us to enshrine the charter of human rights of which I spoke as well as the principle of a struggle against regional disparities and an amending mechanism for the future.

● (1730)

This is the only thing we are doing. The procedure is relatively simple. I find it unfortunate that, basically, the major objections raised in most cases by hon. members opposite are objections about the procedure or questions of form.

It seems to me that if the substance is of such importance at the present time and if it can be accepted by the great majority of the people, as they have suggested, it should certainly be possible to discuss the procedural points and come to an agreement so that we may, within a reasonable time, meet the objectives which are aimed at in this process, Mr. Speaker. I would now like to reply to the second question which has been asked of us, which is why we are doing this. We have been asked: All this is very well, but why are you doing this and why are some people objecting? I shall tell you why. There are three reasons. The first is that during the referendum, not so long ago, a considerable number of us travelled through Quebec and elsewhere in the country to tell the people that what we wanted basically was to ask the people to object to sovereignty-association because, for our part, we were offering a guarantee of constitutional renewal. Who will be the most pleased if this project is cancelled and if we are not determined to take our responsibility seriously as a government? Whose interests will it serve if we do nothing in Ottawa? It is important for the members from other areas of the country to be aware of the answer. This would please and suit the Parti Québécois since it will mean one more step towards independence for Quebec. This would be the end result because in the mind of Mr. Lévesque, nothing can work in the federal system. We are unable to come to any agreement. The renewal of federalism is unthinkable.

Those who talk about renewed federalism are dreamers. This is what he tells the people of Quebec and some members of this House would like us to prove him right. They would like to prevent us from taking certain initiatives which would not penalize the provinces to the advantage of the Canadian government, but which would simply guarantee certain basic rights and freedoms for Canadian citizens. You would like to object to that for procedural reasons, and at the same time play into the hands of Quebec separatists, who blame us for being powerless, for being incapable of getting out of the constitutional deadlock and making a start for changes that

really correspond to the aspirations of Quebeckers and Canadians as a whole! This is what you are now doing with your opposition.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, we are consistent. We fulfill a commitment. We promised Quebeckers and Canadians that we would get out of the constitutional deadlock then we promised a renewed federalism. This is what we are doing, Mr. Speaker, and believe me we have no intention of letting go! We mean business. We are going to see this through. But there is something else. It is not only a question of principle, it is a question of believing in one's country, loving it and trying to bring it to change in a way that does not meet the aspirations of one political party, the Parti Québécois, whose aim is independence. Because we here, in Canada, also said that time had come for an in-depth renewal of our federal system. What we are doing here is only a first step. Do not cry yet, this is nothing as compared to changes that will be coming later on when finally our constitution is in Canada, when we are able to make federalism go forward with an amending formula.

Mr. Speaker, this is only a first step, not the final goal. To those who are scared because they think we are going too far, I say this is only one step, it is not breaking the deadlock. The advantage in our attempt, Mr. Speaker, is that it will allow federalism to change, it will alleviate tensions in the future when our constitution is here, when it is human, modern and includes a mechanism for amendment, when circumstances change, without leading to the kind of confrontation we have been going through and without having to ask everyone else.

That is the second reason and that is the second advantage of our constitutional initiative. First we are being true to our word, second because we are federalists, because we believe in Canada, because we want to unite it even more so, and I have just stated it is a step toward an evolutionary process, a healthy constitutional evolution. And, Mr. Speaker, the third thing that is most important, is that ever since I have been in politics much has been said about the constitution and I have been a member of Parliament for the past six years.

I know that the economy is a fundamental issue. Canada holds an important position in the world. It is a large country which deserves to be further developed. It seems to me that if we respected each other enough and showed it through our actions, if we could once and for all make the first step toward the resolution of this constitutional conflict, we would clear the way for the discussion of other issues that are equally important such as inflation, unemployment, energy and the economy in general. Besides, that is to some extent the reason why we have proceeded in this manner. Mr. Speaker, we felt it was sensible to refer this resolution to the committee for a certain period in order to allow Parliament to consider a budget, to deal with energy and national development. To those who would deny us as a government the right to act in this matter, I say that we have a mandate to govern the country. We do it in a democratic way by consulting Parliament, but our man-