

it enters the eighties that we must take steps to protect fundamental freedoms.

When the Prime Minister stands up tonight to vote in support of the resolution on the proposed Constitution Act, 1981, he will not be standing up in this House of Commons alone. He will be supported by all his Liberal supporters on this side of the House and by members of the New Democratic Party who freely have made up their minds. He will also be applauded by many millions of Canadians who are asking that this step be taken.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacEachen: So much for that canard.

I want to mention another which has been developed in this debate, and it has been repeated so often that it has taken on a life of its own, namely, that a majority of Canadians are opposed to what we are doing in putting forward and advancing this resolution. Well, I do not find anyone knocking on the door of Parliament asking that we stop this process. I do not find anyone knocking on my door in my province asking that this government stop what it is doing.

Most polls which have been taken on this subject have been distorted. They have been unfairly interpreted to say that the views of the Canadian people represent opposition, when what they really do is express a preference most of us have and most of us share, namely, that it would be better if it were possible to make these advances with the consent of all the provinces. The people of Canada believe that, I believe that, the Minister of Justice believes that and so does the Prime Minister. But what one prefers is often not possible. Let us not continue to repeat the falsehood that the majority of the people of Canada are against what we are doing in this constitutional effort. I could quote so many polls, but this would take up a lot of time that is not available to me. I find it very interesting that recently the Premier of Ontario, who is a strong supporter—

● (1550)

An hon. Member: And a fellow traveller.

Mr. MacEachen: Someone opposite said that he is also a fellow traveller. He is a supporter of this package. He went to the polls explicit with the people of Canada about his support for the federal package, and he achieved a majority which had eluded him on two previous occasions.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacEachen: I do not think hon. members opposite find that very unappetizing to swallow. Just yesterday we introduced into the House of Commons two new members of Parliament, both of whom are sitting on this side of the House, one from Ontario and the other from Prince Edward Island.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacEachen: The people of those constituencies in two widely separated provinces had an opportunity to say "No; stop!" One can imagine that if we had lost those byelections

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the Leader of the Opposition would have said, "I now have a clear indication that what you are doing is wrong and unpopular".

Yesterday we received the results of the Gallup poll which was taken at the height of the hijacking of this Parliament, when members of the official opposition were doing everything possible to bring to the attention of the people of Canada that what we were doing was wrong and dishonourable and that we were breaking up the federation of Canada. On the very day that they were screaming out their questions of privilege in the House of Commons, the people responding to the polls were saying "We prefer the Grits. We prefer them more than we did in the last election."

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacEachen: I say let us not perpetuate the mythology that what we are doing is being opposed by the majority of the people of Canada.

I find it amazing that there is another canard being promulgated, and that is that the Parliament of Canada, by proceeding without the consent of the provinces, is establishing a new principle of confederation, or introducing a new principle into the Canadian federation. The Premiers are urging that nothing be done without their consent. It is not the Parliament of Canada or the Government of Canada which is attempting to build into our federation a new principle; it is the Premiers and their supporters who are now trying to create the view that the only way Canada can proceed is through some form of consent by the provinces.

On a radio program the other evening the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom) talked about the double majority being the way to proceed. It may be his preference but he will not find much support in the precedents and the law of Canada. Yesterday the hon. member for Etobicoke-Centre (Mr. Wilson) repeated the same line. I refer both hon. members to the speech made by the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Joyal), the co-chairman of the joint committee, who in my opinion gave one of the most lucid presentations that I have ever heard in the House of Commons. It is a model of clarity, information and analysis. He said:

Indeed, the Canadian Parliament is not required to consult the provinces and get their agreement before submitting a request to the British Parliament. The Chief Justice of the Manitoba Court of Appeal explained this quite well and substantiated it in an elaborate judgment given on February 3 last. In any case, long before this judgment was given, Canadian experts had already recognized this fact.

If hon. members want another authority, I refer them to a former prime minister of Canada, the late Right Hon. R. B. Bennett, who spoke in the House of Lords in 1946 and made a most revealing statement, the frankest exposition on this point that I have read. He said:

There has been a good deal of discussion about an amendment of the Constitution being a political measure.

He might have added to that if he had heard this debate. I continue the quotation. He said: