

The Constitution

sal child care. Now the government is using the Constitution to leave by the back door.

We need a strong and caring central government to protect the social interests of our people and all Canadians.

A few short months ago we passed the 20th anniversary of the multiculturalism policy in this country. Would a bill like that be passed without a strong federal government? Would a bill like that mean anything? How could the policy be enforced without a strong central government? Multiculturalism means equality for all.

Who would defend the environment, the Rafferty-Alameda dam, James Bay, Carmanah, aluminum in the St. Lawrence, Great Lakes poisons, ozone depletion? The federal government may not do enough, but I guarantee the provincial governments would do less to fight big business for habitat, wildlife and humanity.

Without a strong central government, what weight would Canada carry on international issues? How would Canada fare in international trade where the game is quickly changing? Words like "globalization", "free trade", "automation" and "subsidy wars" conjure up images of a marketplace that is on shifting sands, where small business is squeezed out and large businesses lay off thousands or jump the border.

Only a strong caring government backed by a constitution of conscience can face the world and represent all Canadians on these issues; not just the east, not just the west but all Canadians.

In my experience, Canada is a living, breathing thing, always changing. If the government is suggesting the provinces be allowed to perhaps set their own goals and their own agendas, for example immigration quotas, and this is written into the Constitution, how would it change as Canada changes? It is very very difficult to amend the Constitution, as we are witnessing today.

It is also very difficult to write a constitution. For example, many of our social programs are crumbling under our feet. Medicare is being attacked from all sides. The Canada Health Act without protection may be a mere mention in a history book, not a working piece of legislation, unless free medical care is guaranteed a right of citizenship. The same is true of our educational system. Family allowances, social assistance, pensions,

income security, there is merit to entrenching all these values in the Constitution. These rights are our rights, but for how long?

Perhaps the people who have rights are the ones who fight for them. I do not mean through violence. I mean people voicing their concerns loudly and clearly to the government. This is how we carve a place for ourselves in the new Constitution.

• (2140)

Just last week I joined a round table discussion of Canada's top scientists, members of the Canadian Institute of Academic Medicine who were concerned about the adverse impact of national disunity on our national institutions. The scientists provide us a model of how harmony can be achieved among people of diverse cultures, languages and areas of expertise.

They have continued to spontaneously converge to harvest mutual benefits from their work. They continue to discover new vistas, useful in diagnosis and treatment of humankind's diseases. The reason, I believe, is that they work for a common good. This force drives them to overlook geographic and ethnic origins or other tongues.

We could all learn from our academics and scientists. We must learn if Canada is to remain one country.

Following our debate tonight, the joint committee for a renewed Canada should take to heart our views and those of our constituents for whom we speak before finalizing its report later this month.

In the final analysis, the constitutional package must be submitted to a national referendum. Only a constitution of the people by the people and for the people will bind us together as Canadians.

Mr. Stan Wilbee (Delta): Mr. Speaker, it is a real privilege to be able to speak on the constitutional proposals as presented by the government.

In my riding of Delta we recently had two meetings on two evenings in two areas of the electoral district to discuss these proposals and to find out just what the people of Delta had in mind and what they thought of the government's proposals.

At the time I promised that I would bring the report of the meeting to my colleague, the right hon. Minister responsible for Constitutional Affairs, and to the co-