

Adjournment Debate

● (1820)

I read very recently an essay written by Woodrow Wilson which I think is very illustrative. I would like to read just one short section. He said: "Today when our government has so far passed into the hands of special interests, today when the doctrine is implicitly avowed that only select classes have the equipment necessary for carrying on government, today when so many conscientious citizens smitten with the scene of social wrong and suffering have fallen victims to the fallacy that benevolent government can be meted out to the people by kind-hearted trustees of prosperity and guardians of the welfare of dutiful employees, today supremely does it behove this nation to remember that a people shall be saved by the power that sleeps in its own deep bosom or by none, shall be renewed in hope, in conscience, in strength by waters welling up from its own sweet perennial springs, not from above, not by patronage of its aristocrats. The flower does not bear the root but the root the flower".

In conjunction with this I believe that we should pay a great deal of attention to the concept of referendum to the people on important issues. We all recognize that as legislators here we represent a broader constituency than just our own home constituency. I also speak for Canada. I long to keep this country together. I think I speak on behalf of my constituents when I voice those sentiments.

However we also need to recognize that on many issues our people are well informed and with an informed debate can become more informed and thereby give us real valid input, even to the point of having a referendum.

I would also like to indicate that sometimes ordinary citizens feel totally left out of the process. There is something that they want done. Government will not hear them. It seems to me wise as a back-up, probably used very infrequently, that we have a method of citizens' initiative which will allow the citizens themselves to place on a referendum ballot a question which is to be answered and which is to be binding.

I recognize that my time is fast disappearing. I would like to simply say that on the mechanisms of referendum and of citizens' initiative we have done a lot of work in developing them. I do not have time now to go into those details, but they do work, they can work, they do work in other parts of the world. I believe it would greatly enhance the democracy of this country if we were to incorporate those as well.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6.22 p.m., pursuant to order made Wednesday, February 2, 1994, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and to put forthwith every question needed to dispose of Government Business No. 6 now before the House.

[English]

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Motion agreed to.)

● (1825)

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

CIGARETTE SMUGGLING

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu): Mr. Speaker, as the Standing Orders allow for the "late show" or the adjournment motion, we can come back to a question raised in the House. I therefore take the four minutes which the Standing Orders allow me to use to return to the question which the Prime Minister was asked on January 21, 1994, when I asked why his Minister of Indian Affairs spoke of setting up a system of native self-government, although in his government program and his political speeches, the Prime Minister still said that there was no more room for constitutional negotiations.

In his answer, the Prime Minister said that it was not certain whether negotiating native self-government required amending the Constitution or not.

Now, all constitutional experts agree that it is necessary to amend the Constitution and the Prime Minister himself said that a committee was studying the matter and would report on it. So if a committee is about to report, why does his minister say that he wants to open negotiations right away, when he does not even know if he needs the provinces' consent or if he must open the constitutional issue to do so?

What is surprising is that, in the second question I asked him, the Prime Minister said that the Minister for Foreign Affairs would be very happy to answer in a debate. He said, "I have nothing to add to the statement I made earlier. Our ambition is to treat everyone equally in Canada, and that is why we believe that everyone is equal in this country and no one has special status".

The Prime Minister said that after his minister announced that he was ready to open constitutional negotiations with natives on their right to self-government. Despite claiming to support his minister, the Prime Minister said that he did not want to give special status to any province or nation, such as the Quebec nation or the aboriginal peoples.