

The Constitution

ought to have for francophone Canadians should be at the highest level.

Perhaps I say so because I am biased. I have family members who are of a francophone nature and I say so with great sincerity. Mr. Speaker, I have to tell you that my constituents, both on the issue of constitutional renewal and on expediting the process that we now have before us, have repeatedly on each and every occasion that I have met with them said: "What about the Canadian economy? When are you going to give to the people of Canada some real action with regard to the Canadian economy?"

As I said, I am not stopped in the coffee shops, at the Kinsman Club or at the various breakfasts or the dinners that I go to as their elected representative and asked specific legal questions, whether it be on the residual power, whether it be on the Council of the Federation. I am certainly asked about high unemployment. I am certainly asked about the medicare problems in this country. I am asked about the mobility of Canadians from coast to coast. That is what Canadians in my constituency are talking about.

That is not to suggest that constitutional renewal is not important. It is important and we must underline that. Equally so is the disunity within our country for a variety of reasons, one of which is the poor economic situation that Canadians find themselves in today.

I urge members from all political parties who are on the special joint committee to continue the process, to continue to do it with this maxim, which is in the best interest of all Canadians from coast to coast. Upon completion of that process, Quebecers, Newfoundlanders, people from out west, people from Ontario, people from all across this country, want us as members of Parliament, as representatives, to put the same time, the same energy, the same resources into resolving some of the most fundamental economic questions that this country has had to face in well over 100 years.

We must in the best interest of the country and also because of the people we serve have the same kind of enthusiasm and energy to provide action plans for resolving those problems that we have, as I have mentioned earlier, in medicare, to resolve some of the real underlying problems with regional inequalities, regional opportunities. That is what Canadians in my constituency

have been telling me and telling me in very plain language.

Whether it be the unemployed steel worker, the displaced coal miner, the individual who is seeking to become part and parcel of an older workers' adjustment program, whether it be students who are seeking financial assistance to pursue their post-secondary education or better still seeking summer employment, they want the Parliament of Canada to work on their behalf.

• (1840)

I close with this, Mr. Speaker. I know governments when elected with a majority believe in their hearts that they have a mandate to implement measures which they believe to be important. I suggest to members opposite that one should be prudent about moving on matters which do not enjoy the support of Canadians from coast to coast.

I say that not because it is not prudent to do those kinds of things. I use as an example the GST. I talk about free trade. There are all sorts of other issues, but there is a limit to what Canadians will accept no matter what the government is.

I urge all my colleagues to keep the best interests of the country at heart so that we can come together as a nation and renew our federation by keeping Quebec within the Canadian family. Keeping the people of Quebec is more important than the Quebec government, just as the people of Nova Scotia are much more important than the government in Nova Scotia.

I am confident that with goodwill, prudent judgment and the willingness to compromise on behalf of us all that we can resolve our constitutional dilemma and get on with building a strong economy which I believe Canadians are equally concerned about and on which they want some concrete and specific action.

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to be able to rise and participate in this debate on the historic crossroads at which we now find ourselves in attempting to draft a new Constitution for Canada.

I represent the constituency of Burnaby—Kingsway in British Columbia. I will be holding a public forum in my constituency this spring following the tabling of the parliamentary committee's proposals on the Constitution. At that time I hope to have an opportunity both to listen to my constituents and also to share with my