

*The Constitution*

I decided that in presenting views tonight I would quote from a few of the briefs and documents that some of these groups have submitted and see if they do not give some indication of the views that are held in my constituency on this subject.

I must say that the constituents who have expressed opinions have done so forcefully, vigorously and well. I know that their remarks, comments and briefs have been directed to the government primarily, and, where appropriate, I have forwarded those to the government, but in most cases I have received copies.

I also canvassed the views of my constituents in a questionnaire in one of my recent householders, a householder of last autumn. Unfortunately the results have just become available because of the lengthy period required to compile the results; 738 questionnaires were returned. While I do not want to cite these figures as authoritative because I think there is a serious imbalance in them, and I will explain that in a moment, they nevertheless indicate the views of some of the people in Kingston and the Islands.

Of the 738 questionnaires that were returned, 64 per cent of the responses were identified as males, 26 per cent females, and 10 per cent gave no answer to the question on gender. Forty-four per cent of those returned were returned by persons aged 60 and over.

• (1920 )

So again there is a significant imbalance because, of course, 44 per cent of the riding is not 60 years of age or over.

Nevertheless, in answers to a few of the questions, a constitutional statement on the nature of Canada should include four items. The four items that were listed were: our attachment to two official languages, 51 per cent said yes; the diversity of the cultural heritage, 64 per cent said yes; the distinct character of Quebec society, 31 per cent said yes; and the recognition of the role of the aboriginal people, 78 per cent said yes. The figures do not include the persons who did not answer each of those questions. They are taken out so that in calculating the noes, you have to take those into account. In other words, the no is not the exact inverse of the other figure. However, those are the kinds of questions that were put in this questionnaire and those are the answers I received.

Do you favour a reformed Senate in which senators would be elected? Eighty-one per cent said yes.

Do you favour the free circulation of people, goods and capital within Canada? Ninety-four per cent said yes.

On the elimination of interprovincial restrictions on trade, 86 per cent said yes.

When legislation is passed in the House of Commons, do you believe the Senate should have the right to amend legislation? Forty-five per cent said yes. The right to reject it? Twenty-nine per cent apparently said no to that.

Do you believe in the creation of new provinces? The answer there was mostly unsure.

Those were the kinds of questions that were asked and those were the kinds of answers I received.

However, there was another group called the Committee for a Rational Canada, which was formed in my riding. It was a group of concerned citizens, most of whom had lived and worked in the province of Quebec. They submitted an extensive brief to the special joint committee outlining their views on the government's proposal. I wanted to quote from the conclusions of the brief they submitted: "The Committee for a Rational Canada was agreeably surprised with the government's proposals for shaping Canada's future together. We recognize it is extremely difficult to produce a document which will please a majority of the governments and others with vested interests.

"We undertook this review of the current constitutional crisis before the government's document was produced because we believe strongly in Canada and believe it is individuals like us who must get involved. There are too many hidden agendas among those who make the most noise in the media, and unfortunately the average is not heard. No wonder the electorate are turned off by this process.

"The over-all feeling of the members of this committee is that we must try to keep Canada together, but not at any cost. A separated Canada will result in two parts which are each poorer than if together. However, the continual bickering and perceived blackmail by both sides we have endured over the past 20 years cannot continue.