

The Address—Mr. Brewin

committee, would, I believe, find a wide measure of agreement on some of the constitutional changes required. I believe we would find agreement, for example, with regard to eliminating from the constitution 60 or more paragraphs which are clearly and totally obsolete. I believe we could reach agreement about protecting in the constitution basic human and individual rights which are the foundation for our democratic structure. I believe we could isolate the problems which are at the root of our differences; this might involve some re-examination of sections 91 and 92 of the British North America Act, but why not? These are not sacrosanct. Let us look at that question.

I am certain that we in this house could and should consider what are the necessary functions of government in the modern age, and with rationality assess how these functions of government can be divided or shared between different levels of government so as to achieve the most satisfactory results for all the people of Canada wherever they may live. In doing so I think we could act in the spirit of an excellent article or paper on this subject by the hon. member for Mount Royal to whom I have already referred. The subject of this paper is federalism, nationalism and reason. Reason is usually not associated with the other subjects, though it has been added on this occasion. This is contained in a collection of papers under the title "The Future of Canadian Federalism."

● (9:30 p.m.)

It is high time that the elected representatives of the people of Canada were given an opportunity to take part in this process of exploring, discussing, and perchance discovering some of the rational solutions of the problems that face Canada at this time. I am not suggesting, Mr. Speaker, that a parliamentary committee would replace the more detailed examination of some of the very valuable and useful commissions of inquiry that exist now, or may be created in the future. For example, the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism is surveying a field which is at once much broader, and in other senses much narrower than the question of the constitutional changes required to strengthen Canadian unity.

In the Speech from the Throne it was stated that it remained the objective of the ministry to provide that the constitution of Canada may be amended in Canada. No doubt, Mr. Speaker, this was a gentle and delicate way of announcing that the so-called

Fulton-Favreau formula is dead. The people of Canada have every reason to be grateful, in the first instance to the people of the province of Saskatchewan and the then government, and now to the people of the province of Quebec for resisting and preventing the enactment into law of this foolish formula.

It is satisfactory to those who believe in democracy to find that the good sense of the people sometimes prevails over the fallible judgment of their leaders. The absurdity of enacting a procedure of amendment which would put the present constitution of Canada into a strait-jacket before it was carefully examined in Canada, should have been obvious, and it now is very obvious to most Canadians. But, Mr. Speaker, because the means of patriating or bringing within Canada the Canadian constitution were, to put it mildly, ill-advised, is no reason why the objective should be abandoned.

When the representatives of the people of Canada in this house have carefully considered what change in the constitution they are prepared to support, it will be time to incorporate in the new constitution, so revised, an appropriate and flexible amending procedure which would have the effect of bringing the Canadian constitution wholly within Canada.

Mr. Graftey: At this very interesting section of the hon. member's speech would he permit a question?

Mr. Brewin: Certainly.

Mr. Graftey: Does the hon. member, who is making a very constructive suggestion about a parliamentary committee, visualize that this committee could go across the country and meet with similar provincial committees? Does he have this in mind regarding the activities of such a federal parliamentary committee?

Mr. Brewin: I would return the compliment by saying to my hon. friend that his suggestion is a very interesting one and would certainly be considered by such a committee when set up. However, I am not myself a zealot for travelling across the country. I would perhaps bring some of those people to Ottawa, but if the mountain won't go to Mohammed, or whatever the expression is, then I think the committee should be prepared to travel. We have our duties here and I would hope most of the work of the committee could be done right here. I know there are some committees of provincial legislatures dealing with this matter.