

*The Constitution*

ment at the negotiating table and have come to agreements over pacts and have arrived at money agreements, such as various fiscal arrangements affecting the tax structure and revenue sharing, the Canada and Quebec pension plans, medicare and hospital insurance plans, welfare assistance programs, money for post-secondary education, manpower training programs—the list goes on and on—immigration policy and the many other things on which there has been agreement in the past. Why can we not expect agreement now and in the future?

This government chooses to ignore or forget the past. It chooses to go the route that would forever destroy the spirit of co-operation and consensus. Is this, as the government contends, because of the fact that the very nature of our country is changing? Is it, as the Prime Minister says, because agreement is no longer possible? My answer is, the reason agreement cannot be achieved is that this government does not want agreement, it does not want consensus and it does not want co-operation, except in the case of agreement with the provinces on the basis of its specific plans.

I should like to quote again to this House what the Premier of Saskatchewan said, and this should interest the members sitting to my left. He said in a speech to the Dalhousie law alumnae:

The process permits a referendum where provincial legislatures fail to agree to a proposal for constitutional amendment. It is a way to temper provincial intransigence, but not federal intransigence.

The federal New Democratic Party should follow the Premier of Saskatchewan because Premier Blakeney was right in his remarks. The federal NDP should reject this package. It should reject this amending formula and its provision for the referendum. It is a referendum that would allow the federal government to bypass the provinces now as well as in the future, a referendum that would do away with co-operation and the motivation the federal government needs to reach consensus, one that would in fact do away with federalism.

For the reasons I have listed, I and the people of Peace River, the Progressive Conservative Party, eight out of ten provinces and, indeed, the majority of the people of Canada, have chosen not to support the government referendum and amendment clauses.

Let me look at the history of the referendum. We can see it has a rather marked past. It has been used in many cases to abuse the established system of government, whether that be a system of democratic government or the system of co-operation and consensus.

France in 1958, against a background of political instability, under the de Gaulle government, initiated a referendum that gave him the powers of a near dictatorship. Germany in 1934, while the Nazi party served as the force of propaganda and momentum, initiated a referendum that granted Hitler unchecked executive powers and enabled him to establish himself as a dictator. Canada in 1944, under Prime Minister Mackenzie King, initiated a referendum on conscription that split the country into two permanent factions. Had that referendum been avoided and had the government of that day

acted with responsibility, we possibly would not have been left with the legacy of anti-Anglophone and anti-Francophone influences with which we have had so much difficulty dealing in the past.

Now the government wishes to entrench an amending formula complete with a referendum that will enable the government to initiate referenda on its own recognizance. The result would be to divide and conquer the people of Canada. The government would be the conqueror and the people would be the conquered.

● (1450)

It is time to stop and ask ourselves if this Parliament would be doing the right thing in passing this resolution. We are not doing the right thing if we send this document as it stands before us to the British parliament.

In conclusion, quite simply I am trying to say to this government. Let us stop and think about the spirit of our nation, about the backbone of Canada, which is federalism and the spirit of co-operation and consensus. Think about the effect unilateral action will have on that spirit. I submit it will be broken; the backbone will in fact be shattered.

I ask hon. members opposite to ask themselves what will become of Canada without the backbone of federalism, without that spirit of consensus and co-operation. Canada may still exist without it, but would there still exist the will of the people in the west, in the Atlantic provinces and in Quebec, to continue to fight for a better Canada? Or would the fight turn into one of region pitted against region, province against province and people against people? Will the loss of this spirit of co-operation, of the backbone of federalism, not result in division and conflict?

I believe that this government has a clear choice, one of consensus, of federalism, or the choice of unilateral action, of a unitary state, the choice of division. I do not think that choice is difficult. I think a five-year-old can see it, and I would ask this government to stop and listen to that five-year-old. I ask that they listen to the concerns of all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Claude-André Lachance (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Trade)):** Mr. Speaker, François Mauriac wrote on one of his Blocs-notes, and I quote:

I remain on the side of those who mistrust the pretexts and excuses invented by the strong to ensure their domination and have us believe that might is right.

Recent history, as far as constitutional moods are concerned, compels us to be guarded, if not outright suspicious when dealing with these issues.

Some people have claimed that the hon. member for Rosemont has serious misgivings concerning the resolution under review. They are right and I mean to look into them now. They have also wondered how he would vote. That I leave for some other time. But what are these misgivings, Mr. Speaker? Through their elected representatives, the Right Hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) invites all Canadians to join with him