

The Constitution

the resolution. We are going to refer it to a committee, where everyone will have an opportunity to comment, to put his arguments forward and probably to point out and correct what he considers is wrong.

Mr. Speaker, if the committee makes an in-depth study of the resolution and tables a report, I hear the Leader of the Opposition say: "We will be back on February 12 with a report". I do not care whether we come back on February 10 or February 12 or December 9, as long as we work seriously. I have no objection whatsoever. We will manage to study the proposal within the framework of the schedule Parliament must follow. I heard the Leader of the Opposition say that we should be talking about the economy and energy matters. I think he understands very well the restrictions imposed by the present parliamentary schedule and that he must also have a lot of work to do and therefore it might be better not to keep the debate going for too long if that is to disorganize everybody's work and delay our proceedings, as has been done for two or three weeks after question period. Members of the House would keep raising points of order and questions of privilege for two or three hours. I do not think that delaying the work of the House that way is what one could call serious parliamentarianism.

How will Canadians use the new constitution? I honestly do not know. Time will tell. There is no doubt, for instance, that the constitutional instrument carries more weight than an ordinary statute because a constitution is not easily changed. The Leader of the Opposition spoke against section 42 because it refers to a referendum and the people will have their say. In short, Mr. Speaker, that is democracy, it is a regime where people have the right to speak. Personally, I have read several editorials and I would refer the Leader of the Opposition to an article written September 23, 1980, by Pierre Tremblay of *Le Droit*. I do not intend to read it because it is quite long but it is very good. Indeed, Mr. Tremblay's theme is that the federal-provincial dispute is over, that we must now call on the people when politicians are up against a deadlock they cannot get out of.

Mr. Speaker, I have been told that in history—and that is very interesting, in my opinion—political powers may often skirt around or repeal certain constitutional rights. I am thinking in particular of section 23 in Manitoba which was repealed by the will of a single legislative assembly. How many times in our short history did linguistic minorities have to fight to maintain, or even worse, secure such rights as the free choice of their religion and their language? How often did minorities see their rights disappear just when they seemed to be safe? It took eighty years to recognize that those statutes of the Manitoba legislature were discriminatory and anti-constitutional. It was recognized because a man, Mr. Georges Forest, on his own initiative, was willing to give of his time and money to fight for one of his fundamental rights, his linguistic right.

Here, in Ontario, we lived under regulation 17. It took several years before we could get that regressive and dis-

criminatory measure repealed and get justice. Even now, it is still an important theme in Ontario where we often call for justice. That work is very important to us. Let us not think, Mr. Speaker, that the charter of rights is the achievement of all hopes, that it will answer all the aspirations of the official languages minority groups. It is an excellent beginning, which delights me, but though we have obtained the required minimum, it does not mean that we should miss any opportunity or initiative to improve it. If we really want the official linguistic minorities to live their culture and language fully, they must be dispensed health and social services in their tongue, in their own provinces. Finally, radio and television services must be extended to the whole population, and that, in the two official languages wherever those who request it are numerous enough.

Canada is becoming increasingly a people of minorities. Statistics confirm it every day. I feel, therefore, that it is imperative that their fundamental rights be protected. There is nothing extraordinary, Mr. Speaker, about the fact that a country has one or several minorities. Most big countries in the world have linguistic minorities that they have to accommodate. Besides, there is a maxim which says that a minority that has the will to survive and is attacked will know how to fight back, whereas a minority that is unaware of itself and is also ignored by the majority is often doomed to extinction.

● (1840)

[English]

We are faced in Canada today with a challenge of great importance to us all, the challenge of keeping this country together.

To understand each other with all our regional and sectional loyalties, our varying customs and traditions; to understand what this country is all about, a country with two official languages and a multitude of cultures; to understand that there are forces at work to build a better Canada while at the same time other forces want to destroy it—therein lies the challenge.

I see, Mr. Speaker, you are going to rise and tell me that my time is up. I am very sorry. I would have liked to finish my speech, but I must abide by the rules and surrender my place to another member.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Perhaps the Chair might take this opportunity to familiarize hon. members, those who are present, with the habit I have of trying to warn hon. members that they are coming to the end of their time. Whether the hon. member speaking happens to catch that message or not—and I know there is a considerable amount of pressure on members, although the Chair has been a trifle lax—I think I ought to be exact from here on. I want to warn hon. members that whether they see the notification that they are coming to the end of their time or not, I will from here on cut short debate precisely at the time required.

Mr. Bill Yurko (Edmonton East): Mr. Speaker, in speaking to the amendment and to the main motion, I have a 40-minute speech which I cannot give in the 20 minutes allotted to me. Therefore, I will make the whole text of my speech public. In