

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

SUBJECT MATTER OF QUESTIONS TO BE DEBATED

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 40, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Winnipeg-Assiniboine (Mr. McKenzie)—Canadian National Railways—Hall report recommendation; the hon. member for Halifax West (Mr. Crosby)—Canadian Armed Forces—Review of salary and allowances; the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Hudecki)—Health—Adoption of world-wide code governing baby food marketing.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE CONSTITUTION

RESOLUTION RESPECTING CONSTITUTION ACT, 1981

The House resumed debate on the motion of Mr. Chrétien, seconded by Mr. Roberts, for an Address to Her Majesty the Queen respecting the Constitution of Canada.

And on the amendment of Mr. Epp, seconded by Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton)—That the motion be amended in Schedule B of the proposed resolution by deleting Clause 46, and by making all necessary changes to the Schedule consequential thereto.

Mr. Derek Blackburn (Brant): Mr. Speaker, before I begin the substance of my speech this afternoon I, too, would like to extend my deep appreciation and thanks to all members of this House and of the other place who sat on the special joint committee which helped produce the resolution which is before us today. Many long hours of hard work went into those committee sittings.

I often get very angry—usually quietly angry—when I hear some members in this chamber try to argue in a spurious way that this is a document that is being forced upon Canadians by some foreign Parliament at Westminster. We all know that the constitutional resolution of 1981 which will become the new Constitution of Canada was conceived in Canada, was written here and was debated, discussed and argued by members of the Canadian Parliament. It will be passed, before too much longer I hope, in this chamber in Canada. It is not a document of another Parliament—it is Canadian-made for Canadian people.

It is with a sense of both urgency and pride that I enter this debate. We are on the eve of passing into law one of the most important resolutions in our nation's history, a document

The Constitution

which will have impact on the lives, the hopes, the responsibilities of all Canadians. It is a document, in my opinion, that is long overdue.

The British North America Act of 1867 has served us, but the time has come for a new constitution, written by Canadians for Canadians; a document deeply imbued with the great traditions of British justice, of fair play, of flexibility, and of common sense. It is a pragmatic document, not flowery and philosophical and not beyond comprehension of ordinary people and the application of elected representatives.

Too often constitutions are written by elitists, for elitists. The constitutional resolution before us is written for people, for our fellow Canadians. It is written not only for the two founding races but for all citizens of our great country. It is written for our native community, for the millions of Canadians who chose Canada as their homeland. It is written for minority groups. I commend this resolution to the people of my constituency, to the people who first elected me ten years ago to sit in this chamber on their behalf. I will be proud to defend it at any time in my constituency.

There are many reasons for my support for the resolution, but because of time limitation I will confine my remarks to just two or three major aspects.

In the first place, Mr. Speaker, I am unabashedly a strong federalist, although I have always recognized and respected provincial rights and aspirations where those rights and aspirations have not adversely infringed the Canadian national ethos. I suggest to all hon. members that the resolution before us reflects my general, philosophical approach to federalism in our country today. It does not, Mr. Speaker, reflect the arguments of those members who would call for the establishment of a Constitution based on the concept that Canada is a community of communities, or, as one wag has put it, a nation of five hundred shopping plazas!

The only free country in the world of which I am aware in which a confederation, that is, a loosely-knit community of semi-autonomous states, has effectively worked is the Federal Republic of Germany; that is, West Germany. However, unlike Canada, Germany is a very old country, deeply imbued with an all-pervasive sense of what was once called "pan-Germanism", whose origins stem from centuries of gradual development. While German states may have strong individual powers, "Germanism" transcends most, if not all, conflicts of a political, judicial and economic nature.

Canada, on the other hand, is a relatively young country whose fragile culture is still weak, whose national identity has only recently begun to reflect a national presence. I suggest that we cannot afford the luxury of establishing a confederation much as some provinces would dearly like. We cannot afford to chance future national growth by giving in now to narrow, parochial and regional interests which would only serve to weaken and destroy that delicate fabric which is so desperately needed if we are to go forward as one nation, one people.