

The Constitution

This discussion has been very healthy and very helpful. It will help us to sort out exactly what we need to do when we come to the end of this particular process.

I want to mention something that bothers me a great deal. It seems to me that in some places in this country there are forces of darkness. These are the kinds of forces that instil fear and insecurity in the hearts of all Canadians because they play on all of the little things of which we are afraid.

Because this is a great democracy, these people and these forces have a voice. It is important that Canadians resist the temptation to believe absolutely everything they hear. They should use their heads. They should examine the positions that are being espoused and ensure that they are rational and reasonable. It is only by understanding the obligations of our citizenship that we will be able to preserve this democracy. These voices sound very appealing at times. They are the ones that pit the French against the English, the aboriginals against the French. They pit interest group against interest group and they pit everybody against the national interest. It is up to us to ensure that we exercise our responsibility as citizens in a way that resists those forces and looks forward to the optimistic, the wonderful and all of the things that are good out there.

• (2020)

I am going to just very briefly read from a booklet that was given to us today by one of the people who came to speak before the committee. It says: "Let Young People Speak". Young people have a way of saying things that get right to the heart of the matter and they say it much more eloquently than I ever can. I will read a couple of them very briefly. One is "Canada is a rainbow of people and places". This is from a student in London, Ontario. There is another one from Medicine Hat, Alberta which says: "It is like being in paradise". Another says: "Canada is a clean country, free of earthquakes and wars". Young people understand the value of these things. Another said, and I love this one: "When they ask about Canada, I usually tell them about the snowstorms, the fields and the caterpillars".

These kids really get down to the basics. They understand that there is more to life than fighting about constitutional issues. Finally, a teacher reports from Lumsden, Saskatchewan, that a vote was taken in her

class to decide if Canada was a good country. The result was 20 out of 20 are in support of Canada.

Twenty out of 20 are in support of Canada in this House of Commons as well. I think that with good will and with a lot of leadership, we will get through this round and we will keep the country whole.

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina—Qu'Appelle): Madam Speaker, thank you for the opportunity of joining the discussion tonight. I would rather call it a discussion than a debate on the future of our country.

First of all, let me start out by making it very clear to the members of the House that most of my constituents would rather see me rise in my place and talk about economic issues than about the Constitution. I think it is fair to say that a lot of Canadians who are facing severe economic uncertainty in their lives are much more concerned about their personal lives.

I have many constituents that are farmers who are seeing their family farmland that has been in their family for generations disappearing. I have constituents that are workers, that have worked in certain industries and shops for years and years who have lost their jobs or on the verge of losing their jobs or are afraid that they might lose their jobs.

They see that their own lives are falling apart. They are concerned about the future. They are not optimistic about the future. They feel Parliament should provide some economic leadership and that the Constitution is almost like a discussion about how many angels can fit on the head of a pin.

This does not affect their lives. They would like to see some leadership out of Ottawa. They are angry in many ways. To tell the truth, yes, they are angry at the constitutional debate. They have gone through the debate through the eighties and they would rather have us get on with what they consider important things in their lives. There is no denying it, they are important things in their lives because they affect their lives so deeply and so severely.

Having said that, I also wish to indicate to the House where I come from on the constitutional debate. I was one of the four in my party who disagreed with my party when the initial constitutional proposals were presented by Mr. Trudeau back in the 1980s. I felt uncomfortable