

to think. There was more to the effect that this same man, "be his cause strong or weak, would gladly surrender the rest for the freedom to speak."

This is something that is so fundamental to the House of Commons that it has coloured this debate. I believe there are many of our colleagues on both sides of the House who are not going to be able to speak. That is a shame because there were two explicit promises made to make certain that this situation in fact would not occur.

Listening to the Prime Minister in the course of his two-hour plus speech, as he twisted and turned for most of his time, I recalled a verse that I had read once from the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam which I think describes part of this problem. It goes like this:

Myself when young
Did eagerly frequent,
Doctor and saint, and heard great argument,
About it, and about, but ever more,
Come out by the same door
As in I went.

What a pity our Prime Minister did not act earlier on the Constitution. He alluded to this when he spoke on March 23. He said at that time that he had a consensus of provinces in 1971 at the Victoria conference, but that one province held out for something. The irony of it all was that what that province of Quebec wanted it got anyway.

Then the Prime Minister said—and no one has checked him up on this yet, because he has given the impression of single-minded, faithful, dogged determination on constitutional reform—"I let a few years elapse". He sure did. He waited until April 19, 1975, by his own admission, and by then he had blunted our economic progress and soured our country; and that is why the whole process of constitutional reform is so difficult today.

● (1550)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacKay: I agree with the observation "better late than never". We could have a more bipartisan and more constructive approach, and could have had in the past if the Prime Minister had stopped his standard tactics of confrontation, or as Walter Stewart would say, "the methods of divide and con", which, by coincidence, is the first syllable of the Constitution.

However, looking back toward yesterday, if carried to extremes, can cause one to lose the visions of tomorrow, so it is not my intention to spend my entire speech rehashing old events. However, there are reasons for the deterioration in federal-provincial relations during the past dozen years, and I want to remind my colleagues in the House that, besides the ones involved in constitutional reform, these past difficulties are very relevant in assessing what is happening in our country today because they affect the present climate and the present mood.

Anyone, for example, reading the current energy policy of this government would automatically have a sense of *déjà vu*,

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as I did when I listened to Donald Macdonald bringing in his policy on December 6, 1973, which at that time was a very comprehensive one. It was going to do a lot of things for Canada. It was going to provide a national market for our conventional and synthetic oil supported by a pricing mechanism with sufficient incentives to develop our oil industry, pipelines to be constructed to the eastern part of our country and an incentive plan for conserving our energy.

The big news at that time was that we would be self-sufficient in energy by 1980 if all went well. Today, seven years later, there is still no pipeline to eastern Canada, although the Prime Minister solemnly promised that on January 25 of last year. There is chaos in the industry and no agreement on pricing between the government and the producing provinces. This kind of performance does not help to instil any confidence in the Canadian people, and it is only one of the many gross errors of the Prime Minister and his government.

If John Diefenbaker were here today, I could just hear him say, with every justification: "The same old bunch are at it again".

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacKay: What can Canadians hope and expect from a government like this as it modifies our Constitution? Will it and can it widen the scope of our freedoms, making us a happier, better nation? I have my doubts, since under our British tradition our Constitution is not the source but the consequence of a large and varied basket of freedoms which we already have as part of our heritage. This government cannot give us rights. We have those rights now. It can attempt to restrict them, define them or enumerate them, but it has no business giving the impression to the Canadian people that it can bestow them. This government wants to keep the residue of power; that is this government's ambition. But that is exactly backwards. The residue of power belongs to the people, and any country which forgets this does so at its peril.

J. A. Corry, an eminent and able legal scholar at Queen's University, put it this way: he said the Constitution—

—is never a guarantee of good government: If the Constitution is a good one, in the sense of fitting well with the balance of opinions and attitudes in the country, it makes good government that much easier to achieve. But the main service of a good Constitution is to put obstacles in the way of bad government.

Does this government's concept of a Constitution match Professor Corry's description? Does it fit well with the balance of opinions and attitudes in Canada, or will it by the clause encouraging referenda allow a bad government to spend its citizens' tax dollars for propaganda to influence their thinking? This is a very serious and fundamental concern. The fairness of a government's approach is absolutely vital if we are to have referenda as a device to be used in shaping the future of our country.

Last October the executive secretary of the Canadian Arctic Resources Committee, a non-profit public interest group, sounded a warning. He singled out government propaganda on the issues of energy and the Constitution as containing gross errors of fact in the advertising campaigns funded by public