

*Government Orders*

Unfortunately, while the government dragged its feet before it introduced the bill that would deal with the question of referenda, it did not really go through the proper consultations, as my colleague from Kingston and the Islands has raised so eloquently, about the different flaws that existed in the legislation. If the government had taken the time to do the consultation with the opposition, I am sure many of those issues would have been resolved prior to the introduction of the bill.

Having said that, I will be supporting the bill, as my colleague from Kingston and the Islands indicated, with reluctance. Simply put, it is because no one wants to be put in a corner and blackmailed that if you do not support the legislation you are working against the unity of Canada.

In our caucus and in our party we support the idea as well as the principle of consultation with Canadians. Our leader has in the past promoted, still is and will always be promoting the question and the issue of consultation with Canadians.

In my riding I have many distinguished constituents who have been working tirelessly on this question of the Constitution and the question of consultation with Canadians. In particular, I would like to mention one of the outstanding leaders in the community, Gail Stewart, and her group of constituents who lately produced a newsletter called "O Canada: Dare to Dream, Shaping Our Future Together".

This organization is a non-partisan, apolitical organization with one purpose in mind and that is to save and preserve Canada as we know it today. Here is what it has written in its latest edition, March 25, 1992, volume 1, No. 3:

It's not too late to change the debate. It's difficult to think clearly about the constitutional debate. There are so many proposed amendments, so little time to consider them, so much going on behind closed doors, so much at stake.

Also, the debate is taking place in a global setting where ecological and environmental problems threaten our future. These realities must surely bear on the shaping of a constitution, yet they have been overlooked.

The process is changing—let's take the next step: instead of negotiating, why not work together?

I want to congratulate my colleague from Kingston and the Islands who specifically was stressing the ques-

tion of working together and the point of working together with all sides of this House, with those who believe in a United Canada, those who believe in a fair Canada.

I want to spend a few minutes putting my own feelings on this issue. It is a feeling which is echoed so eloquently by my constituents in their latest bulletin. We have to start looking out to see our position on the international scene, rather than focusing on issues that are local. We have to focus on issues that unite us, rather than focusing on the issues that divide us.

There is nothing wrong with having a constitutional debate, a constitutional discussion. It is extremely important for any nation to have those kinds of debates providing at the end we come out of those debates united, as one force and as one unit.

While this year we will be celebrating Canada's 125th birthday, my constituents and I echo the sentiment that we have to put more emphasis on this issue and as well we have to recognize the fact that Canada did not start only 125 years ago. Canada started over 10,000 years ago with our native Canadians.

• (1640)

Those elements which were echoed so eloquently by many Canadians across the land must be recognized not only in our Constitution but as well in our daily lives.

We have to focus on a common history in order to talk about a common future. Your Honour probably knows that if you study history in British Columbia nowadays, you might not be reading the same material as a student who is studying in Nova Scotia, in Newfoundland, in Quebec or elsewhere in Canada. We do not have as yet a common basis so that every Canadian will learn the same things when it comes to the history of this country.

Citizenship—and I see the Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism here—is not taught as widely as it should taught be in Canada. We are not putting enough emphasis on teaching Canadians about what it is to be Canadian. The whole debate on division of powers has to be changed so that we can talk more about the division of responsibilities. When we get to the point where we start talking about responsibilities rather than talking about powers, the debate and the tone of the debate will change tremendously.