

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, April 27, 1992**

2:30 p.m.

Date: 92/04/27

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

We, Thine unworthy servants here gathered together in Thy name, do humbly beseech Thee to send down Thy heavenly wisdom from above to direct and guide us in all our considerations.

Amen.

head: **Notices of Motions**

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With prior discussion between yourself and the Government House Leader and the Liberal House leader I request leave at the end of question period to sponsor a brief motion dealing with an incidental matter of housekeeping.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling today flood information maps for the city of St. Albert, the city of Medicine Hat, the town of Cochrane, and the town of Fort Macleod.

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Speaker, seated in your gallery today is a friend of this Assembly, a member who served for some 15 years, from 1971 to 1986, four terms as the MLA for Vegreville. I'd like to ask the hon. member to stand up, and let's give him a rousing welcome.

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Speaker, as indicated in the ministerial statement Friday, this is Consumer Week, and I'm pleased to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly three individuals who have given outstanding contributions with respect to the consumer marketplace and who have received therefore a special award, a certificate of appreciation that they were given this morning. In the members' gallery are Lynne Arling, the president of the Consumers' Association of Alberta, long an advocate of consumer rights and issues; Sally Hall, the former national and Alberta president, who as well has served on many distinguished committees; and Loraine Duguay, the executive director of the Native Friendship Centre in High Prairie. Along with Sally are her daughter Patti Potter and her grandson Alex Potter. With Loraine Duguay are her sons Jared and Jordan. I'd ask them to stand as well and that the Assembly now give them warm thanks for their commitment to consumers in Alberta.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Avonmore, followed by Clover Bar.

MS M. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to introduce to you 24 students from J.H. Picard school, a French immersion school in the constituency of Edmonton-Avonmore. They are accompanied by their teachers Mme Simone Demers-Secker and M. Sean Osborne and also a helper, Kim Gates. I would ask that they now stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Clover-Bar.

MR. GESELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and to the members of the Assembly 32 guests from the Fort Saskatchewan Christian school. The grades 6 and 7 class is accompanied by Miss Charlene Dohms, teacher; Mrs. Jackie Watt, teacher; and Mr. Paul Allison. I would ask our guests, who are seated in the members' gallery, to rise and receive the welcome of the members of the Assembly.

head: **Ministerial Statements**

Volunteer Week

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, the International Association for Volunteer Effort has declared this week Volunteer Week. Created to recognize the importance of volunteers in our society, Volunteer Week draws the world's attention to the value of volunteerism and volunteers each year. In 1992 the theme chosen for Volunteer Week is Volunteers: the Vital Link and reminds all of us of the critical importance of volunteers and volunteerism in our lives and encourages us to think of our participation in society as a volunteer.

The Canadian Volunteer Week initiatives taking place all across Canada this week are a national effort to recognize volunteerism as an integral part of our culture. As a provincial government, through the lottery funded Wild Rose Foundation, we are joining the partnership efforts of communities, volunteer organizations, and corporations to recognize the benefits of volunteerism in our communities and to make Albertans aware of the contributions of volunteers and volunteer agencies to the quality of life we enjoy in our province. Many of us will have the opportunity to participate in Volunteer Week activities of communities throughout Alberta, and we will see excellent examples of how Albertans, committed to the belief of people helping people, dedicate their personal energy and resources to the healthy future of our province through tremendous volunteerism.

Alberta recently signed a unique protocol of agreement on volunteer exchange, the first of its kind in the world. This agreement between the government of Alberta through the Wild Rose Foundation and the prefecture of Hokkaido, Alberta's officially twinned province, is for the exchange of volunteer leaders, practical volunteers, and information and research on volunteer development.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's volunteer spirit is a model for the world, a model which affirms this fundamental belief of people helping people. During Volunteer Week we proudly recommit ourselves to the principles of volunteerism on which Alberta was built, and I humbly ask all Members of the Alberta Legislative Assembly and the citizens of Alberta to salute the volunteers of our province.

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MARTIN: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Certainly we in the Official Opposition would also like to acknowledge volunteer work and of course commend the many volunteers in Alberta. I think if you look throughout Alberta, the figures I've seen, we have perhaps more volunteers participating in this province than anywhere else in Canada. We are truly blessed with volunteerism.

I must say to the government that you cannot abuse volunteers by having them take over the government's responsibility. I point to the need for more volunteers in food banks. They're not happy doing that, Mr. Speaker. That's not where they want their volunteerism to go. We have volunteers trying to teach literacy,

money that should be used in different ways. Parents have been told when they try to volunteer that they should go around and monitor different day care centres.

The point I want to make, Mr. Speaker, is that we are downloading a lot of government responsibility onto the backs of volunteers, and that's leading, if I may say so, to some frustration, if you talk to people out there. So two things are happening: these people can burn out, and secondly, you stick them into areas that they're unqualified for.

So in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that we commend the volunteers; I'd certainly join with the minister in doing that. But let's let volunteers do what they're good at in areas that they're traditionally good at and that they want to volunteer to do to make it a better province, and let's have the government accept their responsibilities and do their work.

head: **Oral Question Period**

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition.

Economic Development

MR. MARTIN: Yes, Mr. Speaker. The waste and mismanagement with this government goes on and on and on. A review of the public accounts shows that for every successful business venture that this government has backed on an ad hoc basis, another six have failed, that for every dollar returned to taxpayers by the six companies that succeeded, another \$42 was lost by the companies that failed. This record speaks to the folly especially of this cabinet and this government trying to pick winners and losers. My question is to the minister of economic development. How can the minister justify this blatant misuse of taxpayers' money when we're running these high deficits?

2:40

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I hope to have more of an opportunity when we deal with the estimates of our department in the Legislative Assembly, and I hope the Leader of the Opposition will be present so that we can give him a full and detailed answer. Some months ago we indicated our various involvements with the business community, with the educational institutions, with our municipalities. There's a long list of backstopping by this government.

If the hon. member is suggesting that we should not have involved ourselves with the farm credit stability program, I wish he'd be open enough to indicate so. If the hon. member is suggesting that we should not have offered interest shielding to the small business sector, I wish he'd indicate so. If the hon. member is suggesting that we should not offer student loan guarantees to our student population, I wish he'd indicate so. If one looks at the record, we find that student loan guarantees have had a greater default rate than the business loan guarantees. So if we were to use his equation, we would not involve ourselves in supporting our students. If he wishes to get into that debate, I wish he'd deal with it honestly.

MR. MARTIN: Well, I hardly understand how we got to students when I was talking about ad hoc business arrangements. Mr. Speaker, 36 companies have lost money, \$1.6 billion. Don't talk to me about the students. We're talking about something totally different.

General Systems Research, Myrias, Alberta Terminals, Chembiomed: we can go on and on and on. There are 36 of them that we've lost money on, \$1.6 billion. How can the minister justify this incredible rate of failure?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, one only has to examine the economic activity that we have taking place in this province. We're the envy of all of North America. We recognize that there is a North American and worldwide recession, and that is why this government has been so proactive in creating jobs for Albertans.

The hon. member asked me why I brought up the student loan guarantees and the student involvement. Because the hon. member is suggesting that there have been defaults and because of those defaults we should withdraw. Well, if the hon. member wishes to take that equation one step further, the default rate has been 19 percent for our student loans. Now, if the hon. member is suggesting that we should withdraw because of the default rate, let him deal with these issues honestly.

MR. MARTIN: Let me say it slowly for the minister. I'm talking about ad hoc business loans to your friends, not student loans, Mr. Speaker, \$1.6 billion. Think of the economic diversification of that, \$1.6 billion. That's the reality of it.

My question to the minister is simply this: given the vast amounts of taxpayers' money that this government has wasted, will the government now cease such ad hoc assistance to business until at least there's a thorough public review?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, whenever there is an involvement on behalf of this government, the information is made available to hon. members. Whether it be through the public accounts or whether it be by way of news release or order in council, this information is made available. I suggest to the hon. leader that he examine our total involvement: again, the thousands of farmers that we have supported to make sure that agriculture is viable within this province, the thousands of small businesses within this province that we have offered interest shielding support, the thousands of students that we have offered support to, the municipalities. What we've attempted to do is, on a very equal basis, offer support to all segments of our population recognizing that there is a worldwide recession, and we want to make sure that there is a maintenance of jobs within this province for Albertans. We see that as our key responsibility: job creation for Albertans.

MR. SPEAKER: Second main question, Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MARTIN: I'd like to designate my second question to the Member for Edmonton-Highlands.

MLA/Media Interaction

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, as you know, this sandstone palace that we call the Legislative Assembly can be a pretty intimidating place sometimes. As you know, the place is full of chaos in the hallways after question period, and quite frankly I believe that all members of the Assembly would agree, I submit, in the context of a scuffling incident last Friday, that we need to put some effort into cleaning up the image around here. In that context, I'd like to ask the Premier if he's prepared to take steps, beyond establishing this legislative reform committee, which still doesn't have a name, to help in sort of cleaning up the image so that the public can feel comfortable coming to this place knowing that it's their place.

MR. GETTY: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd say that we've done a great deal, and I'd certainly listen to any suggestions the hon. member might have about making this building more and more accessible to the public. I only draw to the attention of the hon. members the ceremonies that we hold here on a regular basis and then, of

course, all through the Christmas period where we invite people, schools and others, and where we have a bright, welcome place for skating and other things. I don't agree at all that the people of Alberta think this is a place that has a bad reputation. It has been a place of tradition and history and something that most Albertans, perhaps unlike the hon. member, are very proud of.

MS BARRETT: Well, Mr. Speaker, no dispute about that. My point is that especially when the House is sitting, it can become pretty chaotic.

The Premier has invited a suggestion from me, so I would like to ask the Premier if he would now consider asking his government members who sit on the Members' Services Committee to sponsor a motion which would overturn a prior decision so that the media, for example, can have access to the Confederation Room, the way it was up until three years ago. I think this would go a long way in helping the situation. Would the Premier agree?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has made one suggestion, and I don't have a closed mind to that suggestion. I think there were problems when that area was accessible to the media. That's why there was a change. For my part, I think the real key is that we treat each other – that is, elected members and members of the media – with decency and courtesy and manners. If that's happening both ways, that should solve most of the problems.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, the Premier must have noticed a difference during the last three years compared to when the Confederation Room was available for media to conduct interviews with members of the Assembly. The reporters and their camera operators now have to deal with behind what they call the line of death. This is causing a problem. Will the Premier take a more considerate approach to his response and please agree that we should axe the concept of the line of death and allow reporters a proper room in which interviews can be conducted safely and less chaotically?

MR. GETTY: Well, that's certainly something I would want to have happen, Mr. Speaker, that the media, the reporters, and ourselves treat each other with a great deal of courtesy and respect and that we work to allow each of us to do our jobs in the best way possible within this building. That's what we're trying to do.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Glengarry, on behalf of the Liberal Party.

Parliamentary Reform

MR. DECORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many, many Albertans want to see parliamentary reform. They want to see MLAs have more free votes. They want to see power pushed down from leaders and cabinets to the MLAs. They want recall. They want the election of the Speaker. I'd like to ask the Premier, inasmuch as the Premier promised in the throne speech to bring forward a parliamentary package or a committee to review this: what's the delay? Why isn't this matter proceeding, Mr. Premier?

MR. GETTY: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member only has to refer to the throne speech to know what the proposal was, and that was an all-party select special committee that would look at any ideas that people might have in terms of reforms. Some reforms are talked about by people without a real understanding of the

special legislative and parliamentary traditions that we represent in the British parliamentary system.

We were working to conclude the throne speech and the budget presentation first, and now we will be bringing, certainly from the government's point of view, the select committee members so that we can get that select committee working. I could advise the House right now that the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, the Minister of Advanced Education, will be the chairman of that committee, but all of the members haven't been finalized. I don't know about the other members' side. The House leaders and Mr. Gogo will talk to them. We are now firming up the members of our side of the committee.

2:50

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, many of the rules in this Assembly are outdated. One of the rules that we deal with relates back to 1642. Another rule that we deal with takes the position that ministers need not answer questions. All of those things need to be changed. I'd like the Premier to tell us what the time lines are. When is this going to get going, and when is it going to be completed?

MR. GETTY: I would expect, Mr. Speaker, that the committee will decide that. They will meet, and they will determine the time it takes them to come up with the recommendations that are necessary.

I just caution the hon. member. He has not been in the House very long. Things that have come down through the ages, that great tradition, through the British parliamentary system are not things that you discard quickly. They are not things that you treat with disgust. They are things that have a great deal of thought and tradition behind them in our democratic system, and I would hope that in making any changes you take the time to judge well before you make those changes, and you do not treat this institution and all that it stands for in our British parliamentary system with the kind of disdain that the hon. member is showing for it.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, great traditions, archaic rules that don't require answers to be given are not rules that should be perpetuated. There should be evolution and change.

My final question to the Premier is this. Numerous suggestions have been made by members of this House to have the Speaker of the Assembly elected on a yearly basis. Will the Premier commit to that initiative?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I just wonder about the hon. member, if he thinks before he asks his questions. Surely if we are creating a committee, we won't in advance tell them what they will have to decide. That is the beauty of a select committee of all members and all parties of this Legislature, who will do, with some thought, some planning and some recommendations.

I say again to the leader of the Liberal Party that he has not been here long. He does not show an appreciation. I understand his frustration when he hasn't been able to adjust to the rules of the House very well, but that often can be your own failure rather than the failure of the system that we operate within.

MR. SPEAKER: Wainwright.

Teachers' Strike in Battle River

MR. FISCHER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Education concerning the Battle River teachers' strike and their rejection of the latest offer made by the school board.

The collective bargaining system seems to be targeted at hurting the students, especially hurtful to some of the grade 12 students that are trying to attain high enough marks for university entrance, some of them hoping for scholarships that require a minimum attendance record. Could the minister tell us what provisions he is making to protect the interests of the students?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I know I speak on behalf of all members of government. We are as anxious as anybody to see the students back in the school, back in the classroom, and back learning, before their teachers. I know my colleague the Minister of Labour will want to speak on the specifics of the labour dispute.

As for ensuring that the students' learning can continue, the government, through the Distance Learning Centre and through our book branch, has made available to seven of the school boards over 4,400 units of learning material in 14 subjects, and this is as of 12:01 today. We stand ready to ensure that any further requests are in the hands of students as quickly as we possibly can. I just want to underscore, Mr. Speaker, our desire to get these materials into their hands but more importantly that both sides will be able to come to a conclusion that's best for kids so that they're all back in the classroom learning, where we all want them to be.

MR. FISCHER: My supplementaries are to the Minister of Labour. The strike has continued now for 21 days, and there seems to be no solution coming. In fact, I believe they're not even negotiating now. What is the minister doing to help end this strike? Has she considered legislating the teachers back to work?

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, it's true that the strike has continued for 21 days, but we should be careful to note that that's 10 days of school that have been lost, as my colleague the Minister of Education has just informed me. As he has also said, our primary concern here is the future of these children and these young people and their schooling. We would hope that they are kept firmly in mind, because they should be everybody's first priority.

The responsibility to negotiate and settle this strike is very clearly that of the school trustees and the teachers. The school trustees, of course, are elected to represent the taxpayers in each school district, and the teachers are responding to their needs as well. Our mediators are on standby. They have been on standby minute by minute and are prepared to leave at a moment's notice if the two parties will avail themselves of their services again. We are certainly urging both sides to come back to the table and negotiate a very early settlement.

Legislating an end to the strike, I must say, Mr. Speaker, would not solve the problem. I think the very clear question that both the trustees and the teachers should be asking here is: just what are the taxpayers willing to pay for the services that these teachers are normally giving these young people? I think both the trustees and the teachers should be out asking the parents and the taxpayers in these districts, who are in fact their customers, just precisely what it is that they are willing to pay for these services.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Belmont, followed by Calgary-McKnight.

Edmonton Remand Centre

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Labour. The Edmonton Remand Centre was designed to hold a population of 200 inmates; there are 580 inmates in there today. The maximum security wing was designed to hold 40 inmates; there are 98 inmates in that maximum security

wing today. Inmates are double- and triple-bunked, and in the dormitory designed to hold 35 inmates 58 are being housed. The only number that has not gone up in this scenario is the staff complement. The Minister of Labour recently announced that 158 positions are going to be abolished in the Solicitor General's department. I would ask the Minister of Labour what process, what study was done prior to abolishing those positions that showed that public safety, public security, the security of the inmates and the staff would not be compromised by these reductions.

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, operational responsibility for the Remand Centre is that of the Solicitor General. He may wish to answer the question.

DR. WEST: The Edmonton Remand Centre certainly does a tremendous amount of work in this province in the criminal justice system, and certainly with the level of charges that have been out there recently and the increase in some of the youth crimes and other types of crimes in the province, the level of inmates at the Remand Centre has increased. I think it's closer to 600. I don't know what number you used there. I agree with you: the staff we have there do a tremendous job.

The management met with the Alberta union of public employees and the staff this morning to go over concerns as they relate to the casual employee versus the permanent employee level that's there. We are well on our way to working out with them the necessary changes as we move forward in certain levels of downsizing to accommodate the vacant positions, the casual positions, and the number of permanent positions that are there in staffing.

3:00

MR. SIGURDSON: A supplementary to the Solicitor General. The inmates, Mr. Speaker, are in lockdown at the moment because the staff at the Remand Centre cannot control the inmates that are currently housed there. Yesterday a seven-inch knife went missing and is still, as of 2 p.m., unaccounted for. Will the minister commit to restore those full-time positions that have been abolished so that the safety and the security of the staff, the inmates, and the general public are not further jeopardized or compromised?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, as I'd indicated, management is working with the Remand Centre at the present time on two points that you just made. Less than five minutes ago I got an updated report from the meetings that just took place. There is not a lockdown position at the present time, and secondly there is no substantiated report of any missing knife in the Remand Centre. The last reported incident that wasn't verified was on April 25.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-McKnight.

Education Funding

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This year's Education budget has introduced an educational claw-back through the double-count system. It has been condemned by school jurisdictions. My question is to the Minister of Education. Will the minister agree to suspend the two-count system until he consults with stakeholders?

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to advise all members of the Assembly that our budget estimates, which were debated on Friday, contain sufficient funds to pay all school boards all the

dollars that they are entitled to. I would encourage school boards to continue to put in place programs that would ensure that all children are able to stay in school but, more importantly, stay learning. That's what's most important.

I would remind hon. members of this Assembly that it was on April 23 of last year that we discussed and debated the estimates of the Department of Education, and on that occasion the hon. Member for Stony Plain and the hon. Member for Calgary-McKnight endorsed a two-count system, specifically for English as a Second Language. I remind the hon. member that she said at that time: "If the number of students goes down, of course you wouldn't have to fund as much. That only makes sense." Mr. Speaker, how you could come to that conclusion for only one part of Education funding and not extend it at least somewhere further along because it makes logical good sense for one part, surely it must make logical good sense for other parts of education funding. So I'd ask the hon. member to re-examine her position, as I've asked all school boards across the province to re-examine theirs.

MRS. GAGNON: Mr. Speaker, the minister has not considered all of the implications of this move affecting all of the school programs, fixed costs being one of those implications. Is the minister suggesting half-year contracts with CUPE, ATA, transportation companies, and so on?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I am asking school boards to consider, just as several companies in the hon. member's and my own home city of Calgary have had to readdress, reassess exactly the way they do business today. The way they do business today is considerably different than the way they did business 10 years ago, because if they did business the way they did 10 years ago, they would be out of business. Just as all of us must assess or reassess our contracts, our other ongoing obligations, so must school boards do the same thing. I can hardly stand in this Assembly and ask taxpayers of Alberta, through their tax dollars, to pay for an education program for children who are no longer there. Why should taxpayers pay for the education of phantom students? I believe that it is incumbent upon this government, who is the trustee of taxpayers' dollars, to make sure they are spent effectively, efficiently, and very, very wisely.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Foothills, followed by Edmonton-Strathcona.

Health Disciplines Training

MRS. BLACK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A number of Alberta students that are currently enrolled in university and college programs in a variety of health disciplines are currently receiving financial assistance through the students stipend program. There have been rumours circulating that this program will be discontinued, and I'm wondering if the Minister of Health, now that the budget has been filed, can clarify the situation, if this program will or will not be continuing.

MS BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, over the course of the current fiscal year we will be phasing out the provision of student stipends within the health system. The issue really becomes one of fairness and an issue of the appropriate body to support training assistance. In terms of the issue of fairness, we have 38 health disciplines, 16 of which receive a stipend. I suppose ideally we would have moved the stipend on to all 38 of those professions. However, in the current fiscal context of the province, that simply wasn't an option. Instead we looked at the appropriate body that should be

supporting training of students in the health discipline, and we believe that that body should be the Students Finance Board. Therefore, for any student currently receiving a stipend, that will continue throughout this fiscal year or the length of their program, whichever comes first. For those who might have anticipated a stipend, there will be some but at a reduced level over the fiscal year. I'll be happy to go into more specific details during the estimates of the Department of Health.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Calgary-Foothills.

MRS. BLACK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many of these students have been in the classroom from the fall until the end of this month and will be moving directly into the clinical portion of their academic training. I was wondering if the Minister of Health could comment as to which specific programs this will affect and whether the appropriate arrangements have now been made with the Students Finance Board.

MS BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, we've had extensive consultations really over the last year with respect to the stipend issue with the many institutions in the province who are not only training our students but also who have dollars within their budget to pay a stipend. I've certainly worked with my colleague the Minister of Advanced Education. The Students Finance Board is certainly well aware of the moves that we are going to be making and have indicated that they will consider new or increased support for student financial assistance if the stipend decision results in undue hardship on particular students.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Strathcona.

Furnace Safety

MR. CHIVERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Labour. Several months ago Climate Master, an Edmonton furnace manufacturer, after receiving \$7 million of taxpayers' money, went bankrupt. It had produced the Flamemaster furnace model which has been the subject of serious and grave concerns in Ontario and Manitoba. The Department of Labour here has issued a low-key request to utility companies, to natural gas suppliers, and to municipal and provincial inspectors to report problems with the Flamemaster furnace product. Will the Minister of Labour advise the Assembly what steps her department is taking to identify and alert owners of the Flamemaster furnace product of the dangerous situation here?

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, this issue arose about a month or so ago. My information at that time was that we put out an alert to all of those people who are routinely in the field dealing with furnaces to ensure that we got instantaneous information back. From their work in the field they had not at that time discovered any furnaces of the nature described that had in fact a defect such as the one that they had discovered in Manitoba and Ontario. However, we didn't stop there. We thought that we should be very much aware and so should all people in Alberta who have furnaces be very much aware that any furnace that's over the age of eight years is likely to develop the kind of fault that was discovered in these furnaces in other provinces. Our information flow backwards has indicated that there is not a problem in Alberta. That was my information when the issue was last raised a month ago. That's as current as my information is today.

3:10

MR. CHIVERS: Mr. Speaker, my information is that it's the same model of furnace that's been sold and the subject of investigations

in Ontario and Manitoba. My question to the minister is: what steps are being taken to identify the owners and alert them as to the dangerous situation? It doesn't seem that there are any.

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, I believe I just went through this. It is true that they are models of a furnace made by that firm, and they have been sold in Alberta. My point is that we have had no reported cases of defects in the furnaces that are in Alberta even though they are of that make. That was target number one. Secondly, any furnace over the age of eight years is liable to develop the same fault. Thirdly, we did put out alerts to all owners of furnaces to ensure that they would not just say, "Oh well, I don't have a Flamemaster; I can relax." We put out an alert that said: if you have an older furnace, for heaven's sake get it looked at at least once a year, because any older furnace can develop these defects, but particularly look at that make, and if you have one, get in touch with your local gas inspector instantly to make sure you have it checked right away.

Workers' Compensation Board

MR. GIBEAULT: Mr. Speaker, my questions today are to the minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board. The Auditor General's report for 1990-91 once again criticized the Workers' Compensation Board for failing to pay some of the work-related health care expenses that arise in the province. As the Auditor General noted, this means that costs that should be charged to employers are in fact paid by the province; that is, the Alberta health care insurance plan. So I'd like to ask the minister responsible for the WCB: given that the Auditor General has been making this point for three years in a row now, not just this year but three years in a row, will the minister tell the Assembly when he plans to take some corrective action and exactly what he plans to do to rectify the situation?

MR. SPEAKER: Two questions.

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's report has been submitted to me and has been submitted now to the Workers' Compensation Board directors. The Workers' Compensation Board directors have informed me that they're working on all the concerns of the Auditor General and will be putting them in place as quickly as possible.

MR. GIBEAULT: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary, then, to the Minister of Health. This problem is costing an overbilling of \$10 million a year to the Alberta health care plan. Instead of continuing to jack up health care taxes on ordinary Albertans, will the Minister of Health tell us what she will plan to do to make sure that the WCB pays all the costs it's supposed to pay and that we don't get employers shifting their burden from workers' compensation to the taxpayers of Alberta through the health care insurance plan?

MS BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, I share the concern of the Auditor with respect to the appropriate payment of services from the funds which they should be coming from. Certainly, the minister of Occupational Health and Safety and I have been working on the matter, and I will continue to press for the most fair solution.

Lottery Funds

MR. WICKMAN: Year after year after year and again this year the Provincial Auditor has called on the government to eliminate the lottery slush fund now controlled by the minister responsible

for lotteries. To the minister: why does the minister time after time after time ignore the Auditor's valued advice?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware of any recommendation put forward by the Auditor General of the province of Alberta that says that the province should not commit itself to helping literally thousands and thousands of volunteer, nonprofit groups in this province.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: will the Premier direct his minister to transfer all lottery funds to general revenues to ensure full accountability and to comply with the Auditor's recommendation?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, we've had this discussion in the House before. As the minister responsible for lotteries has pointed out to the hon. member, we are dealing with these lottery funds in a way that provides the best possible benefits to the people of Alberta.

Hazardous Waste Disposal

MR. MUSGROVE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of the Environment. In 1989 the federal government set up a project at Canadian Forces Base Suffield to destroy all of the chemical warfare that they had on hand at that time. A local citizens' committee working with our Department of the Environment was assured that when that project was finished the equipment would be removed from the site. The project has been completed now for some time, yet it's my understanding that the equipment is still there. Could the minister bring us up to date on what the plans are?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is referring to an operation called Operation Swiftsure, which was set up, as the member pointed out, to destroy waste military toxics and gases and so on. Indeed, that piece of machinery was to be dismantled and shipped to Iraq, but as I understand it, Iraq no longer is interested in the piece of machinery. We do have the assurances of the federal government that it will be dismantled and it will be removed in some way, shape, or form. My officials will be following up with the federal government to make sure that that indeed is done.

MR. MUSGROVE: Well, Mr. Speaker, it appears like no one wants this particular piece of equipment anywhere, not even Iraq. It cost the federal government \$13 million to put it together, and it is my understanding that it's quite similar to our waste project at Swan Hills. Would it be possible that it could enhance the Swan Hills project, if we were to accept it?

MR. KLEIN: It's quite possible, Mr. Speaker, that it could be incorporated into the hazardous waste facility at Swan Hills, but we'll have to make sure that it works and that it indeed complements what is taking place at Swan Hills. We aren't going to buy a pig in a poke. We are going to make sure that it's dismantled and removed, because we do not want to run the risk of waste from other military bases across Canada being imported into Alberta.

MR. SPEAKER: Stony Plain.

Spruceland Millworks Inc.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I want to direct my questions to the Minister of Labour. In 1990, long

before the fire at Spruceland Millworks on March 12, '92, the county of Parkland had ordered that the inoperative, privately owned fire hydrants near the fire site be repaired. The county order was unsuccessfully appealed to the Fire Prevention Council by the water line owners and to the Court of Queen's Bench before the Provincial Fire Commissioner decided to forbid the county from enforcing that order. At the time of the fire the minister promised to investigate the strange ruling by the fire commissioner. I would assume that the investigation must be completed by now. I would ask the minister: would she please inform the House of the fire commissioner's rationale for preventing the hydrants from being repaired thereby ignoring the rulings of both the Fire Prevention Council and the Court of Queen's Bench?

MS McCOY: Yes, Mr. Speaker. The county had requested permission to prosecute, of course a criminal offence. In his mind that wasn't going to solve the problem. The danger was a hydrant, and if the hydrant didn't work and if a fire did occur, then there would be more severe loss than otherwise. The primary concern was fixing the hydrants. He felt that criminal prosecution would not fix the hydrants, so he said: no, let's get on with the real issue here.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Mr. Speaker, that, I'm afraid, is not quite the way I've heard it. It appears that the fire commissioner prevented the county from repairing the hydrants. That's a far cry from going through criminal court, and I would like that reason.

I'd further ask: now that the repairs have been completed, will the minister guarantee that neither the county nor the new owners of the property will be stuck with the bill for repairing said hydrant?

3:20

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, it's true. The hydrants have now been fixed. That was, I believe, an action that my department, the fire commissioner, and the county took in hand just as soon as I knew about the incident that had occurred. Very shortly after that, the hydrants were fixed. Now, the question of who will pay is not something I can give anybody assurances for. The responsibility for payment will follow the responsibility for having the hydrants in operation in the first place. I do not know whose responsibility it is directly at this stage, but I'm sure it will be worked out.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Vocational Rehabilitation Funding

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the Auditor General's report there's a serious indictment of the Department of Family and Social Services' failure to recoup their share of costs under the vocational rehabilitation of disabled persons' agreement. My question is to the minister responsible for seniors and persons with disabilities. Thousands of dollars are left on the table because of unacceptable efficiencies. What's the minister doing to clear up that situation?

MR. BRASSARD: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that the member has brought this up because we're reviewing that situation right at the moment.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, this is a couple of years back. It's inexcusable that that kind of clumsiness has shortchanged Alberta taxpayers as well as the disabled, or both of them. Will the

minister guarantee that he will put a tracking system in place for the thousands of dollars in holding codes, such as the Auditor General suggested?

MR. BRASSARD: Mr. Speaker, I just answered that. We're looking at this very situation right at the moment, and we'll be happy to report back to this Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Lacombe.

RCMP Hiring Practices

MR. MOORE: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. My question today is directed to the Solicitor General. I'm wondering if his department is planning any action regarding the RCMP white male discriminatory hiring practice.

DR. WEST: Well, Mr. Speaker, we contract services with the federal government for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. We just signed a 20-year agreement. Sixty-one municipalities in the province are very pleased to look forward to that fine police force for 20 years. As that goes with contracting, the federal government is responsible for the policy of training and of selection. I will certainly take your comments forward to Assistant Commissioner Holmes and to the federal government.

MR. MOORE: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. In my opinion it's a blatant human rights violation, and I would like to know how the Solicitor General will deal with this in light of the contract? Did we sign a contract that allowed discrimination against white males?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, I had indicated that I will be communicating your thoughts and your question to the commissioner. What we're looking for is equal opportunities for all Albertans, for all Canadians, and the track record of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police has been that they have shown that in their consideration of selection and in training. I will take your question forward.

MR. SPEAKER: West Yellowhead.

Improvement Districts

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over a hundred families, residents in the hamlet of Cadomin in my constituency, are outraged that a study of their hamlet, which was prepared almost entirely behind closed doors, is about to be adopted as fact with a recommendation for no further development. The plan has many varied interests to satisfy: residents who need better water, seasonal residents who want to improve their properties, environmentalists who are concerned about industrial development, and three coal companies who are looking to their future in mining activity. That's too complicated to have been dealt with in three public meetings. I'd like to ask the Minister of Municipal affairs: given that the residents need more time to study this proposal and desire to work co-operatively with the improvement district council, will the minister ask the improvement district to table the resolution for at least six months before any decisions are made?

MR. FOWLER: Mr. Speaker, no report has been brought to my attention. I know that work is being done on the improvement districts. I wish to assure the hon. member that there will be at no time in the Department of Municipal Affairs any report shoved down anybody's throat in the improvement districts or any other areas.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a serious concern because the study recommends that the hamlet be placed under direct control of the ID council. For the ID to take this unprecedented step of designating a hamlet as a direct control district is, indeed, a bureaucratic interference of the worst kind. Will the minister order the improvement district council to put the adoption of an area structure plan on hold pending the development of a land use bylaw for the hamlet and give up the idea of a direct control district altogether?

MR. FOWLER: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm surprised that a former municipal politician wouldn't already be aware that all hamlets are under the control of municipal districts or improvement districts in any case. Notwithstanding that, the whole study of these rural improvement districts is arising as a result of the desire of people living in improvement districts to in fact have greater control over their affairs. That's what this whole study is all about, and that's the manner in which we will proceed while having in mind that there are different interests in different parts of any given improvement district.

MR. SPEAKER: The time for question period has expired. Might we revert briefly to Introduction of Special Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

Edmonton-Jasper Place, followed by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**
(*reversion*)

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me to introduce a very bright group of students from a very bright school named Brightview in the constituency of Edmonton-Jasper Place. There are approximately 28 of them here today accompanied by their teacher Mr. Graeme Walker and a very active parent in the community, Mrs. Dorian Haliburton. They're in the public gallery. I wonder if they would please rise and receive the warm welcome of the members.

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and to members of the House Mrs. Jill Tynan and Mrs. Catherine Kullman, who together with 35 students from Bishop Pinkham junior high school in Calgary-Currie are in the members' gallery today. I might say that Bishop Pinkham has been the most active school in bringing students to the Assembly, and I look forward to meeting with them with the Minister of Education following this point in time. I would ask them now to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Highlands, procedural matter.

Sequence of Business

Ms Barrett:

Be it resolved that Motion 208 on the Order Paper be allowed to stand and retain its place until Tuesday, May 5, 1992.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Using citation 559 from *Beauchesne*, which allows for incidental motions to come

forward without a full day's notice, I'll briefly explain the motion that I wish to sponsor.

I'd like to tell members of the Assembly that I did talk about this matter with the Minister of Health, to whose department it is related. I spoke also with the Government House Leader, in fact two of them, the Speaker, and the Liberal House leader and got concurrence for my request to come forward with this motion. I need to go to Ottawa, actually later today, in about an hour, and I can't get back here in time for tomorrow. In fact, I won't get back until the end of the week, in which case my motion would have come forward. The minister and I agree that the motion is worthy of consideration, and therefore I ask members of the Assembly to provide the unanimous consent that's required to let this motion stand over until my return next week.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. Just a small point: unanimous consent is not required, just a majority consent.

[Motion carried]

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Government Motions**

Constitutional Reform Committee Report

4. Moved by Mr. Horsman:
Be it resolved that the report of the Select Special Committee on Constitutional Reform appointed in this Assembly on March 26, 1991, the report being entitled *Alberta in a New Canada: Visions of Unity*, be now received and concurred in.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege for me to open the debate on the report of the Alberta Select Special Committee on Constitutional Reform. As members are aware, I had the honour to serve as chairman of that committee. I must say it was a very exciting experience to travel across this province to visit the various centres and to listen to Albertans tell us what they thought about their feelings for our country and their hopes for its future.

It was in August of 1990 that the Premier asked me to chair a task force of our own party members, which produced a document called *Alberta in a New Canada*, and that very successful document formed the basis of many of the presentations that were received by this select special committee. After the establishment of the select special committee representing all parties in the Assembly just under a year ago, we went about our work in, I think, a very excellent way with all-party participation. I want to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks and real gratitude to the members from all parties for their hard work and dedication during the past year in consulting with Albertans and preparing the report which is now before this Legislature. This report, of course, is entitled *Alberta in a New Canada: Visions of Unity*. It has been a long and at times demanding experience but also an extremely important and valuable one.

3:30

I would like to thank the committee staff, particularly the committee's secretary, Garry Pocock, the assistant deputy minister responsible for constitutional matters in the Department of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs; John McDonough, who provided research activities; Louise Kamuchik, who is now in the Assembly as a member of the Clerk's staff; and the various members of the staff provided by your office, Mr. Speaker, and the Clerk during the course of that activity. I want to also pay particular tribute to

Hansard, who covered our activities and transcribed and reproduced the views of Albertans as expressed to us during the course of the public hearing process.

In introducing the report, I'd first like to address the process involved and then address the principles of constitutional reform which are contained in the report, principles that I believe reflect the views of the vast majority of Albertans. For the past year the committee provided a forum for Albertans to express – and they expressed in a number of ways, Mr. Speaker – their views on the Constitution and the future of Canada. We toured the province. We held hearings in 14 centres and heard directly presentations from more than 600 individuals and organizations. More than a thousand additional presentations were made to our committee through written submissions or calls to our toll-free number. Some of those phone calls I understand were quite lengthy and sometimes quite entertaining in their comments, as we experienced during the course of our public hearings. I'm sure all the members will have some particular moments they will recall with particular intensity. I won't go into them all right now, but some of them were quite challenging. We also commissioned an extensive public opinion poll, the results of which were published. In addition, the Premier and all Members of the Legislative Assembly have received extensive advice from Albertans on subjects near and dear to their heart and, in addition, from many other Canadians.

Now, we tried to take into consideration all of those representations in preparing our report for this Legislature and for the people of Alberta. As I said, in the process of doing this, Mr. Speaker, I believe that we have in this report reflected the views of the overwhelming majority of the people of this province.

Well, the first principle expressed in the report, Mr. Speaker, is our desire and Albertans' desire to keep this country whole. Albertans expressed a deeply felt devotion to Canada during our public hearings. They demonstrated a pride in our country and a dedication to our continued growth and development. They also expressed their support for our federal system and our parliamentary form of democracy.

The Albertans we heard were not asking for radical changes to our system, but certainly they were saying to us that the system needs to be improved. One of the recommendations in the report was that we establish a special select committee, which has been mentioned in the Speech from the Throne and which was dealt with in part in question period today by the Premier, to review some of the ideas that Albertans had brought forward as to how we can improve the functioning of this Parliament. That work is obviously going to take place over the next period of time – months – and then report back to this Assembly for consideration.

I say to my colleague the Member for Lethbridge-West, who's going to be chairing that committee, that I wish him the same type of success that I had in terms of dealing with my colleagues from other parties, because despite the fact that we sometimes had some partisan comments arise from time to time, by and large these committee hearings were conducted in the spirit of true efforts on the part of all members to come to grips with the questions without allowing partisan concerns to intrude. I wish to my colleague as he embarks upon this new challenge the same type of co-operation.

We want to keep Canada whole, number one. The second basic principle reflected throughout the report is that of equality, because Albertans believe that that principle is necessary to any future constitutional change as it provides the best chance for a united and properly functioning Canadian federation. Albertans expressed many ways in which they want equality to be reflected in the Constitution. They want our political institutions and traditions to

reflect and embody the equality of Canadians on all levels. Now, that's equality amongst individual Canadians and equality among the provinces.

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, for the majority of Albertans this principle of equality should be flexible enough to recognize and accommodate different needs based on historical, economic, and cultural realities, because we embrace the diversity which is found in our country, but we do want to know that in the expression of diversity there can be no second-class Canadians. It is the overwhelming preference of Albertans not to have hyphenated Canadians. We should all be Canadians.

I say, Mr. Speaker, from my hearing, and I believe it's reflected in our report, that no nation can survive the official designation of some citizens or some of its component parts as first-class while others are relegated to some form of second-class status. We want Canada to survive; therefore, we cannot accept a veto for any one province that is not available to all provinces. We cannot accept special legislative or administrative arrangements between the federal government and one province that are not available – not necessarily taken up – to all provinces. We don't necessarily have to have everything precisely uniform, but availability of opportunity must be there for all provinces and all citizens. Alberta cannot accept these two words which cropped up time and time again: “special status.” That was rejected clearly, special status for any province or people in Canada, because those would lead us down the path to destruction as a nation.

3:40

As I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, Albertans want the principle of equality reflected in our institutions, and for Albertans Senate reform is fundamental to any constitutional amendment and is the hallmark of this report. Now, as hon. members know, Alberta has long led the cause of Senate reform. The majority of Albertans do not feel that our province as an equal member of Confederation is presently adequately represented in the federal decision-making process. They distrust the undemocratic nature of the current Senate. In that respect I think it's important to note that part of the history of the British parliamentary system is the struggle over the centuries to avoid decisions being made for its citizens by appointed people. That is the case with the Senate in Canada today, and therefore it is undemocratic in nature, and it's distrusted. They furthermore dislike its unequal representation, and they disdain its ineffectiveness.

Now, Senate reform is not an issue that Albertans or this government have approached lightly. Mr. Speaker, for almost 10 years Albertans have been working to improve that institution. In 1983 our government established another select special committee of the Legislature to explore options for reforming the Senate, and that committee reported to our Legislature in this room in 1985 following extensive public hearings in Alberta and across Canada. That was chaired by my colleague the Member for Calgary-Currie, and many other members that are still in the Assembly served on that committee. They will know that that report came after extensive public hearings in Alberta and across Canada. They recommended what is known as the triple E Senate: one which is elected, one which is equal, and one which is effective. It's not just a slogan. That report was unanimously endorsed in this Assembly in 1985 and again in 1987 following the 1986 general election on a motion by the then Liberal leader, amended by our government. It was again unanimously endorsed. So our

government is committed by those votes to the triple E Senate. The report I introduced today reaffirms that commitment.

Again, Mr. Speaker, our proposal has made progress in the past 10 years. It is now accepted that the Senate must be elected. That principle is reflected in the federal joint parliamentary committee report as well as the reports from the other provinces and their committees which they had put in place to review the issues facing Canada today. Now, the timing and the method of election are being discussed in the ongoing constitutional hearings, but our report recommends that the Senate elections be tied to provincial elections. I won't go into detail as to the reasons why because they are more adequately enumerated in the first select committee report of 1985.

With respect to equality in the Senate, Albertans respect the democratic principle that is represented in the House of Commons. They respect that. They want it to be the case. Therefore, the population centres of Quebec and Ontario will always in Canada have more members in the House of Commons. That's the democratic principle. What we are seeking is an implementation of the federal principle, because if our federation – and Canada cannot function except as a federation – is to function properly, the democratic principle, which is the principle of equality of individuals, and the federal principle, which is the principle of equality of the member states, must both be enshrined in our federal institutions and our Constitution.

I point out this: Canada is not made up of regions; it is made up of provinces, equal provinces that must be equally represented in the Senate and must have equal responsibilities in the Constitution. Now, I know the history leading up to 1867, Mr. Speaker. At that time regions were considered to be acceptable, but Canada has changed dramatically since the pre-Confederation days. British Columbia with a population of over 3 million people and Alberta with a population of 2 and a half million people weren't even contemplated at that time. So the regional concept is passé and, furthermore, has been superseded in many ways in the Constitution by the recognition of the principle of equality.

I would point out that the preamble to the Natural Resources Transfer Act of 1930 – and every Albertan should be extremely grateful for the fact that that Act is in existence – put out the statement that in recognition that all provinces should be treated equally, the natural resources should be transferred to the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. Now, that's a principle of equality that's recognized in the Constitution of Canada, because the Natural Resources Transfer Act of 1930 is indeed part of the Constitution, and every Albertan, every Saskatchewanian, and every Manitoban should be indeed grateful for the foresight of the leaders of those days. That principle of equality was fought for and insisted upon, and I urge our Legislature again to fight for that same principle in this process that we're now undertaking.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

Now with respect to the final E: effective. Our committee has not recommended another level of government within the same Parliament as the House of Commons where the government is drawn from, which would paralyse and forever frustrate the operation of the federal parliamentary system, but what we are seeking is an effective voice that will assist Parliament to make decisions that reflect the needs and the aspirations of Canadians in all parts of Canada. We need that balance between the democratic principle and the federal principle. There's only one place in the federal Parliament where that can be reflected, and that is by reforming the Senate.

With respect to the effective E, we have suggested there a three-tier system of effectiveness for the Senate. In areas of sole federal jurisdiction the Senate could have a limited responsibility: the sober second thought. In areas of shared responsibility, now immigration and agriculture, perhaps as a result of the discussions that list might be expanded. Albertans certainly told us that they don't want confrontation; they want co-operation between the orders of government. Perhaps there may be more concurrent areas of responsibility. There, in those areas – which are now, as I say, only two as spelled out in section 95 of the Constitution Act – the Senate should have more responsibility. But in areas where the federal government proposes to enter into areas of sole provincial responsibility primarily, as they have done it in past years, through their taxing and spending powers, through the declaratory power – now, that's much fallen into disuse, I agree, and perhaps should be eliminated entirely from the Constitution – or the use of the peace, order, and good government clause, and – this is extremely important, Mr. Speaker – any matters which affect resource ownership, management, and control: in those areas the Senate should have a veto. It should be able to stop legislation not just for a short period of time, as is proposed by some of the federal proposals, but indeed have an absolute veto. In other words, the Senate, reformed properly, must have the power to prevent another national energy program.

3:50

Now, Mr. Speaker, we believe that that is the room for negotiation. That area of effective E is the area where we should be putting forward proposals as to how the responsibilities of that body might best be carried out but keeping in mind the bottom line that I've just mentioned about provincial responsibility under the Constitution of Canada not being undermined by the federal Parliament. That is an extremely important position for us to take, and we are taking that.

We really believe that an equal, elected, and effective Senate is an instrument to promote national unity, because as an institution it must reflect the fundamental principle of equality of the provinces, an instrument to express the federal principle that is reflected in any properly functioning federation and certainly not an instrument to grab power from the House of Commons and give it to the provinces, as some people have thrown up by way of mythology.

Mr. Speaker, our committee's report addresses several other important issues. Clearly, aboriginal concerns have to be addressed in this round of negotiations, and our report supports an inherent but defined right of self-government for Canada's aboriginal peoples, that definition to come by agreement between governments and the aboriginal peoples themselves. Of course, this topic has been much discussed and will be much discussed in the constitutional meetings now taking place. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms, including the proposed addition of a social covenant. The amending formula. Defining Quebec's distinct society in a way that recognizes reality but does not grant special status, special privilege, or special rights to either the people or the province of Quebec that other provinces or other Canadians do not enjoy: that must be done. The distribution of responsibilities, the economic union, direct democracy initiatives: all of these issues and others are addressed and prioritized in our report. As I indicated earlier, there will be a committee to investigate parliamentary reform, so I won't dwell at length on those matters.

Mr. Speaker, over the next several weeks several meetings of officials, constitutional ministers – I represent this province in those discussions, and I'll be joined by my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs responsible for native matters in this

province in the discussions and eventually the Premier, other first ministers. Those meetings will certainly take place in order to develop a new constitutional framework that will address these and other issues and in so doing keep Canada strong and united. The challenge we face is enormous, especially given the limited time and the very large agenda which we have. I'm hopeful, indeed I am confident that we will be able to develop a constitutional amendment that will address and satisfy the needs of the vast majority of Albertans and Canadians.

In the end, Mr. Speaker, when we have that agreement – and I am an optimist that we will achieve an agreement amongst the governments of the provinces, the federal government, the territorial governments, and the aboriginal groups at the table with us. I'm confident of that. When we've got that, the people of Alberta will be able to speak clearly on any amendment to our Constitution. Before this Legislature again passes any constitutional amendment, the government will know that it is supported by Albertans. We have introduced a referendum Act into this Legislature. Of course, I look forward to debating that piece of legislation, introduced by the Premier as Bill 1 on the opening day of this Assembly, in the House in the upcoming weeks.

To conclude my remarks today, I want to reaffirm that our government, and, I trust, the members of this Legislature, approach the upcoming constitutional discussions desiring unity of Canada, equality of Canadians, and respect for each other. One gentleman, Buck Kallen, came before our committee at a public hearing in Wainwright. I put it on the record because we included it in the text of our report. He said this:

With all my heart I beg my leaders to leave no stone unturned, no point undiscussed, no decent idea . . . unconsidered on the path to unity for this country. This is the most unique and beautiful country on the face of the earth.

Albertans want Quebec to remain in Canada. They want to address Quebec's concerns so that they will become a full participant in our federation. I had occasion back in September in Calgary to hold face-to-face meetings with the leader of the Parti Québécois and then again with the vice-president of that party just last week. Make no mistake about it, Mr. Speaker; there is a powerful force in Quebec which wants to take the people and the land out of this country. Make no mistake; they want it to happen, and they're striking to that goal. I've told them on each occasion that we do not wish them well. I hope that Albertans as Canadians will let the people of Quebec know that we want them to be an equal partner with us in forging ahead; to address their concerns, at the same time, though, to address our concerns; and to see that what we are asking for in part of these discussions now under way is reasonable, it's right, and it's proper. That's the only way, if we are treating each other with equality, respect, and understanding, that this country will survive.

I've said it on a few occasions since the release of the report, and I said it the day the report was released, and I'll repeat it again today: I hope and pray that Canadians will have the wisdom and the courage and the plain common sense to keep this country functioning and working together.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me say first of all that I think we have to acknowledge that our country called Canada is in a very fragile state right at this particular time. I don't think we can stress enough that the economy is in difficulty right across the country. We've been having constitutional fights really since 1981, and I think it's taken a lot out of the fabric of

the country. It doesn't feel as good as it used to about itself. I think we have to acknowledge that to begin with. I wish it wasn't that way, but I think we have to recognize that that is the reality. We've gone through a very bruising process especially with the previous Meech Lake accord.

As I perceive the public in Alberta when I've been traveling around the province, I might say that they're constitutioned out. They're tired of it.

Their concerns, if I may say so, are more whether I'm going to have a job, whether I'm going to have a farm in rural Alberta, a social program: sort of the daily nitty-gritty dealing of everyday life. I think they perceive at times that the Constitution is a fight over a piece of paper by a bunch of politicians, and I think they really want to get out of it.

4:00

Now, in saying that, Mr. Speaker, of course there are certain people who feel very strongly about the Constitution and rightfully so, but I think, if I may say so, that most people I've talked to are constitutioned out. When I look at some of the polls in other parts of the country, I don't think we're unusual in that regard. I'm told that even in Quebec they're starting to get tired of constitutions. But in saying that, and I wish we really could get back and concentrate on the economy and some of the other issues, there's no doubt that this has to be settled. It can't go on, because I would suggest to you that if this isn't settled, the ramifications are that this country is going to fall apart. The ramifications are that the economy will get worse, and the ramifications are that we will not have a country called Canada very soon down the way. So it has to be settled, and it has to be settled fairly quickly.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the government members here and to the Deputy Premier and the Premier that this is a delicate situation. It seems to me that nobody's going to get everything they want in these constitutional talks this time. If we take a position, whether it be in Quebec or in Prince Edward Island or Saskatchewan or Alberta or wherever, that it's all or nothing – I have to have everything I want or we're not going to play ball – I suggest to you that the country called Canada is going to fall apart.

Now, obviously there are limitations on how far you can go in compromise. There's no doubt about that, and I'll come to some interesting polls on that. I think it's important that this is the document that we're debating. This is what we heard – and I'll come to that – that this is a reasonable position for the government to go and to fight hard for. There's no doubt about that, because they've listened to Albertans. I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure the Deputy Premier is aware, that other provinces are holding public hearings too. They may come away with a slightly different analysis in terms of their reports, and I expect that they're going to come to the table and negotiate very hard too. The point that I'm trying to make is that if this country is going to stay together, good old Canadian compromise is going to have to be there, at least somewhat. How far you can compromise on certain basic principles – for instance, if the Allaire commission from Quebec came forward and every province were to take all those demands and all the rights that they had, there wouldn't be much point in having a country because, as I looked at it, that was almost separation anyhow. I think the only things left would be the post office and the army.

Mr. Speaker, I guess the point I want to make to the government and to all of us as we go into this very, very delicate stage is: let's be careful what we say. Let's be careful when we go to the table that we're doing it – I think the Deputy Premier put it well – in the state of compromise and working towards Canadian

unity. The time is now that all of us – all of us – have to be statesmen if this country is going to stay together. We can't be politicians. We have to be very careful. We can't be self-serving politicians.

I want to say to the people though – and I've heard it, and I'm sure the Deputy Premier has, where they say: "What's the difference? Let Quebec go." Well, Mr. Speaker, those people that say that, I think, are treading in very dangerous waters. It's not a matter of just letting Quebec go. I suggest to you that one of the reasons we're having some difficulty – not all but some difficulty – with our economy is precisely because of the instability dealing with our constitutional matters. If all of a sudden with the debt that we have, they start to see Quebec go, you don't think that's going to have an economic impact on us out here, in the maritimes, or wherever in Canada, frankly we're dreaming in technicolour.

There have got to be greater reasons – I'll come to that – for the country to stay together. Economic reasons, a job, and some of the other things are pretty fundamental reasons, also, I would suggest, for staying. Maybe it's impossible. I don't know. I don't think so. The reality is that we should all, like the statement of the Deputy Premier, work towards the whole, not just parts, and keep this great country called Canada together.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the report itself. There are some limitations that I'll come to. I have no great objection to saying that at a certain period of time this was probably what was heard by the committee, but I do want to say to the government: let's keep it in perspective; a lot of things have happened since then. As I understand it, the committee was going around basically between the months of May and September, and I think a number of things have happened since then that we have to keep a perspective on. A number of significant events have occurred.

First of all, since then the federal proposals were announced in September 1991. The federal joint parliamentary hearings were held in late 1991 and in January and February of 1992. We've had five federal constitutional conferences, and they were held in January and February 1992. We've had the reports of constitutional committees that have been brought down, as I already mentioned, in other provinces and the territories. If I may say so, it was before the Premier's rather famous speech, which, whether we like it or not, had some bearing in terms of what we've been talking about. I'm talking, of course, about bilingualism and multiculturalism. The point in bringing this up, Mr. Speaker, is that all these developments have occurred since we heard about this report. I'm not sure you can get around that. I'm just alluding to the fact that that is the reality.

I'm sure the Deputy Premier has seen some other polls and things that have been pushed forward, but one I thought was interesting came from the Council on Canadian Unity that commissioned a poll on the principal recommendations of the Beaudoin-Dobbie commission. This was conducted from March 18 to 27. I briefly glanced through, and I'm not going to go through all of it, but I want to make a couple of key points. I'm just going to deal with Alberta, not the rest of the country. One question says: thinking of these initiatives together, would you say that you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose the report of the parliamentary committee in general? If I look at Alberta, Mr. Speaker, we get 10 strongly supporting and 59 somewhat supporting, but when you break down the two, 69 percent of them generally support the parliamentary committee and 22 percent oppose. Now, that's just in Alberta. I want to stress that.

Mr. Speaker, the next question that I want to go into quickly:

do you personally think the parliamentary committee's proposals for a new Constitution are a step forward or backward towards reaching a constitutional agreement between the provinces and the federal government? Again in Alberta: a step forward, 59 percent; a step backward, 31 percent; and don't know, 9 percent. I'm just leaving those off.

This is one, of course, that the Deputy Premier likes: would you please tell me whether you personally strongly oppose, oppose, support, or strongly support an elected Senate with different powers and more regional representation? As you know, they don't go all the way into the triple E, but clearly in Alberta 9 percent oppose generally and 87 percent support at least some form: two and half E at least, Mr. Speaker.

If you go into another one that I want to talk to you about that's important to us in the Official Opposition: would you please tell me whether you personally strongly oppose, oppose, support, or strongly support recognition of the inherent right to self-government for native people? In Alberta 21 percent oppose and 75 percent are in favour. I want to come to that a little later on.

There are a couple more. I won't go through all of them and bore you, but there is one that I want to look at later on in the discussion: would you please tell me whether you personally strongly oppose, oppose, support, or strongly support a constitutional commitment by the federal and provincial governments to maintain social services and benefits? In other words, a social charter, if you like, Mr. Speaker. Interesting to the Deputy Premier, because they basically rejected this in the report, is that 13 percent of Albertans oppose, 85 percent agree, almost the same numbers as the triple E. So I will come back to that.

4:10

The final point on this questionnaire, this poll that I want to talk about, I think is just as important. I think it goes right to the nub of the matter, Mr. Speaker. If it meant achieving a constitutional agreement, would you personally be prepared to make significant compromises, small compromises, or no compromises at all to the way you feel about the various initiatives being talked about by the parliamentary committee? What's a small compromise I guess is in the eye of the beholder, of course, and that's a difficult one to know, but I think the important thing is that when you take the significant compromises and small compromises, 81 percent of the people in Alberta are prepared to compromise to keep the country together. Only 13 say no compromises, and 7 don't know.

It seems to me that what people are saying in this poll, and I expect you've heard it in some of the committees, is that above all they want to keep this country together.

Now, let me, if I may, Mr. Speaker, go from there into the report itself and just three quick areas that I think are somewhat negligent. The first has to do with the inherent right to self-government for aboriginal issues. I believe this is one of those make-or-break sorts of issues in terms of this constitutional development. We in the Official Opposition see it as an issue of fairness within the current round of constitutional discussions in Canada. If I may say so, the aboriginal peoples have been waiting for a very, very long time for recognition of their inherent right to self-government. It's important that we recognize that all we do by recognizing the inherent right to self-government is recognize the obvious: that the aboriginal peoples inhabited what is now Canada long before European settlement and that they governed themselves as distinct peoples and nations at that time. That is the reality. They had a system of government here long before we came over, and that's their inherent right. They shouldn't have to ask for that right. That is a fact.

Mr. Speaker, I've had some difficulties with the government on this issue before. I notice that both the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in its February commentary and the federal parliamentary committee have recommended – correctly, in my opinion – the adoption of the inherent right to self-government. I might also point out to the Deputy Premier that Ontario has concluded a statement of political relationship signed by the province and aboriginal leaders which recognizes the inherent right to self-government as a basis for future negotiation. B.C. has also done something similar for future land claim negotiations.

This issue is not a new one. It goes back. The first ministers' conferences on aboriginal rights in 1983, 1984, '85, and '87 failed, Mr. Speaker, because this government among others – Alberta, B.C., Saskatchewan, Newfoundland – refused to entrench self-government as an aboriginal right without prior definition. I suggest to you that if you look quickly in the new report, the rhetoric is a little better, because it says, if it is read quickly, that it might lead to the conclusion that recognizes the inherent right to self-government of aboriginal peoples in Canada. If you look at the wording of it, its language, I suggest to you that it has the effect of doing the opposite, because this resolution again says that aboriginal peoples must define self-government but insists that the definition must be within the framework of Canadian federalism and should not be enforceable by the courts until it is defined by agreement.

I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, and the Deputy Premier knows we disagree on that, that that's not going to solve the problem for aboriginal people. They're far beyond that, and if we dealt with this in that way, that would just lead to more stalemate year after year after year. We'd be back the same way as we were in 1983-84. All we're saying in this constitutional round is the obvious, as I said: they were here with their form of government before we came in; why should they have to ask us again to have their form of government? It seems to me as a matter of fairness and common sense that we should be prepared to do that. Then we'll negotiate the land claims after that, but to ask them to define it and go through a whole process, it's never going to get done. I say to the Premier and the Deputy Premier that I wish they really would rethink this one. I think it is important; I think it could be a make-or-break deal in terms of constitutional negotiations.

The second area I want to quickly disagree on if I can, is the social charter. Now, I know that in the report they talk about social programs – I'm not quoting it word for word – that they are good and we should try to work to have them. What we are suggesting, Mr. Speaker, is that social programs are just as much a part of being Canadian as anything else. Basically, in many ways it defines, I believe, why we're different from the United States. A lot of people when you talk to them about why they're Canadian, talk about these sorts of programs. What we and most other governments have suggested, knowing that it can't go to the courts, is that at least it should be there as a social charter committing governments to basically fostering comprehensive universal and accessible public health care, adequate social services and social benefits, high-quality public education, the right of workers to bargain and organize collectively. It should, of course, also deal with the integrity of the environment. We do agree that this should not be dealt with in the courts but should be dealt with by public review including public hearings and periodic reports by a specialized commission whose reports would be tabled in Parliament and the provincial Legislatures. I say to you that that would have some impact on governments if all of a sudden they had an independent commission going around and saying they're not living up to these social standards.

What we're suggesting in the Constitution here, Mr. Speaker, is that a social charter means also that there would be constitutional guarantees for people, not just for governments. It means, if you like, that our Constitution includes more than just individual rights, as in the American system, but also collective rights, which are very much more part of our Canadian society than the American society. I say to you that the key point I would like to make here – and you can talk to anybody right across Canada, whether it be in Newfoundland or British Columbia, certainly in Alberta as I've pointed out in the poll – is that one of the ways people view themselves as being Canadian is because of our social programs, and they are important.

So I think that's a limitation in terms of the committee report. I would suggest to you, going by the polls, that if we'd had another report and gone out and asked Albertans for their ideas on this, you'd have found, as I said, that they'd be very much for it.

Parliamentary reform, just briefly, the third one, Mr. Speaker. Clearly there's a crying call for parliamentary reform from across the country. We have to do this in this Legislature; we have to do it in the House of Commons. If I may say so, I don't think we need, and I've said this before, necessarily another committee to look into it. I think we know there are certain things that could be done that we and others have advocated. I remember campaigning on this in '86: petitions to ensure debate; more free votes; allowing a certain number of private members' Bills to come to a vote, expanding the number, as I say, to come to a vote. But if I may, I want to just say that there is something that we have to be careful about; I want to go on record about it. You know, we're into this U.S. style of democracy brought to us by Preston Manning. I have no objections to the referendum if it's done properly in terms of the Constitution, but in our British parliamentary democracy, we are not the American system where they want recall and they want referenda for every issue. If you do that, what you're going to have is a bunch of frightened politicians that won't do anything. I want to tell you that the people are just as frustrated with their politicians in the United States as they are in Canada, if you think that's a model that we want to go to.

4:20

What recall would mean is simply this: the wealthy or the large, well-funded interest groups would have the wherewithal to bring this about. That's who would be doing it. It wouldn't be the average citizen doing it. That doesn't happen in the United States, I can assure you of that. For those people that think that would be more democratic, if it's the Liberal Party – now it wants to be the new Reform Party – let me go back in history and tell them that the Social Credit brought in a recall. The first one they attempted to recall was guess who? Premier Aberhart. So they soon got rid of that Bill, and I expect the next government that tried to do that would do the same thing. It would be anarchy. So let's not jump on bandwagons just because you think the Reform Party is popular right now. The reality is that it doesn't work. If anybody thinks it's democratic that only the wealthy would have access to their politicians . . . [interjections] Now, I can understand the Liberal Party and the Reform Party getting on that, but let's be a little cautious before we get in. Mind you, that party's so desperate they'll do anything for votes, anything at all: say anything anywhere to anybody, even if it means being the Reform Party number 2. I had to get that one off my chest, Mr. Speaker.

Let me just conclude on where I started and again say that I believe this country is in a fragile state. I think that anybody who doesn't believe that – if you travel around the country, I don't think they're reading it correctly. I don't think it's hopeless, Mr. Speaker. I think people generally want to solve the problem. I

believe they're starting to want to solve the problem in Quebec much more than they were, say, after the Meech Lake accord, but I really, really stress to the Deputy Premier and the Premier and the government that it is going to be difficult to do. We have to go in with the spirit of unity, as I believe the Deputy Premier said.

As a result of that, I have what I call a friendly amendment that I'm sure the Deputy Premier will appreciate. I would just like to add after the motion, after "concurring in," the following:

and in so doing, this Assembly affirms its will to work toward a consensus on Canadian constitutional matters in a spirit of nation building.

The reason I bring this forward, Mr. Speaker, is that I think it sends a message. As I say, nobody's going to get everything they want; I doubt that the Deputy Premier expects to get everything from this report. By adding the amendment that I'm talking about, I believe it just reinforces the message that we in Alberta, we in the Legislative Assembly are prepared to go the extra step, the extra mile, if you like, towards saving this country. I think that would send a very important message right now from all of us right across Canada that we are working towards a consensus on Canadian constitutional matters in a spirit of nation building. I propose that with all due respect to the Deputy Premier because I think it's an important amendment.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: On the amendment, Edmonton-Glengarry should have precedence. Do you wish to speak to the amendment?

MR. DECORE: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I consider the amendment to be so broad, I have no difficulty with the amendment and don't see how it in any way limits my ability to speak broadly to the issue.

Mr. Speaker, I want to start by saying that our caucus publicly endorses the document, and I want to thank the hon. Deputy Premier for the work that he has put in in bringing forward this document. On behalf of the members of our caucus who participated in this final document, those members have indicated to me that the chairman always treated the members fairly and equitably and allowed proper debate to transpire. I think it speaks well for the Deputy Premier and how he has handled this whole issue effectively and equitably.

Now, I don't want the Deputy Premier to get a swelled head, so I need to put this one caveat forward. I think it's important to set out for the record, Mr. Speaker, that things have not gone well on constitutional matters in Alberta. We all remember as Albertans June 1990 when Meech Lake was passed. There were a great many Albertans who indicated that public hearings had to have been proceeded with before commitments could be made by a first minister, by our Premier at a national level, but the Conservative Party moved unilaterally. It had no public input, and to argue that that public input came from MLAs as representatives of Albertans is a hollow argument. So that needs to be set out for the record.

I think it also needs to be set out for the record that not quite two years ago the Deputy Premier started this process of constitutional review by setting up a committee that had no members from the New Democratic caucus and no members from the Liberal caucus involved in that committee. Some unfortunate comments were made to the effect that we know what position the respective NDP and Liberal parties would take; therefore, there's no need in having them participate in the committee. That's water under the bridge, but it's important to set that correctly out in the record to ensure that if it's needed, if it's required, if there is more discussion to take place, that discussion needs to involve Albertans. It needs a process of public input if there is some new package or some very different position that's being suggested, and it needs ability

on behalf of members of the opposition to participate in a committee.

Mr. Speaker, in March of 1991 our party put forward a document entitled A Single Great Nation. I think it's worth repeating the second paragraph of that document which we transmitted to some 25,000 Albertans. That paragraph said:

We, as Canadians, are the envy of most other countries as a result of our personal security, our economic prosperity and opportunity, our quality health, education and social programs, and our individual rights and freedoms. These have been made possible because of the strength and diversity of our nation; because we have acted together in concert as a federal state.

Mr. Speaker, Canadians often don't pat themselves on their backs. They often don't take credit for the wonderful things that they have accomplished: the involvement of Canadians through two world wars, through the Korean conflict, through the Persian Gulf conflict. There are things that we have done that are truly the envy of the world, and we tend to get ourselves muddled and mired in being negative and gazing at our navels rather than extolling the virtues of the greatness of our country. I need only draw the members of this Assembly's attention to the most recent report from the United Nations that holds Canada in high regard when it comes to quality of life and a place to live in the world.

Mr. Speaker, it is, I think, also important to set out some of the principles that we in the Liberal Party believe are important to stick with, adhere to, and cherish as Canadians. The first is the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We consider this to be a monumental step in terms of our maturity and would not want to see that eroded in any way.

4:30

Mr. Speaker, we take a strong position that national standards should exist for education, for health care, for social services, and for a healthy environment. I am somewhat troubled because of some statements made by members on the government side, by members in Quebec insofar as the environment is concerned, that would have provinces solely and completely deal with these issues and not have the federal government involved. I don't want to see a country with Canadians traveling from province to province and if they get ill, for example, having to ante up more money in Saskatchewan or Ontario because the medicare system has been eroded or in some way taken to the point where provincial governments are staking their own territory and it's this way or no way.

Our party is pleased with the success that has been achieved on the issue of aboriginal rights, on the issue of the inherent right to govern. A major step has transpired, has taken place in that regard, and more work is needed.

Mr. Speaker, we are strong believers in the equal status of all provinces. We don't think that a province should have more power than other provinces. I must temper that. I must put a caveat on that by saying that I and the members of our caucus have mellowed, have changed our position with respect to distinct society, and that is to allow for a change in terms of powers that protect the law and the culture and the civil code of the province of Quebec. We consider it important that each province have an equal say in the decision-making of what occurs in our country. We are strong advocates of a triple E Senate. We believe that there should be a reasonable distribution of national income between different provinces. We believe that it's not improper for us to assess the areas of delivery of government services, that if it can clearly be demonstrated that one level of government can deliver those services more efficiently and more economically than

another level of government, then they should be encouraged to do so. We believe in a bilingual Canada, and we believe in a multicultural Canada as well. We believe that there should be no internal barriers to mobility, trade, or employment.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I also want to give an accolade to Mr. Clark, who I think has done a pretty good job in steering Canadians through the mine fields and the difficulties that . . .

MR. DOYLE: He's my MP.

MR. DECORE: He's your MP, hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

I think we have to acknowledge the fact that he has done a good job. I'm glad it is he that is doing the job and not the Prime Minister of our country, frankly, because I think if it had been the reverse, the other way around, we would have been in extreme difficulty.

Mr. Speaker, there are still a lot of areas of concern for Canadians, concern when you hear an adviser to the Premier of Quebec only yesterday saying that Canadians must regard Quebec differently than a province, that they're something different in that regard. I don't accept that. We are all provinces. The difference with Quebec is that they are a distinct society, and some things must be done to ensure that distinctiveness.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of division of powers is something that still frightens me, because I appeared before the Beaudoin-Dobbie committee. You missed the hon. member with that slingshot move. I'm worried that when I appeared before that committee, the chairman himself indicated that asymmetrical powers were not bad, that powers could be given to all provinces, that there would be some provinces which would take up those powers that would come from the federal government and others which would not. I think this is clearly a ruse and a camouflage to give Quebec additional power. I hope, Mr. Deputy Premier, that you see it the same way and you don't allow it to happen.

Mr. Speaker, I would hope that Albertans are giving the message to the Conservative government and that the Deputy Premier is heeding that message that pursuing themes like disentanglement is wrong, that having the government believe they can do it solely and only on their own in terms of medicare or education or social programs is the wrong way to go, that it is not correct to stake out territory on the environment, a healthy environment, by saying that Alberta is the only Legislature that could deal with that kind of an issue. When rivers flow from our province into other provinces or our air goes to other provinces, I think it's important that we ensure that the federal government has involvement.

Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed in this regard with respect to the action being taken by the government. We agreed with this report. It's clear from the comments made prior to mine that there's agreement from the other caucus. The problem that I have is what happens with the government that goes off now to negotiate with other first ministers or with other ministers on issues affecting the Constitution.

In order to ensure that we're clear that this forms the basis of the negotiation, I would like to make an amendment to the amendment, or, Mr. Speaker, to put forward a second amendment at the most opportune time. It is to ask the government to be bound in its negotiations to what Albertans have told the Deputy Premier and all of us as to what should be Alberta's position in negotiation. We should not see our government go off to Ottawa,

or anywhere, to have a change of position, and I would hope that that would not be allowed.

Speaker's Ruling Admissibility of Amendment

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair thanks the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry for having previously submitted that amendment. Unfortunately, the amendment that's before the House precludes introduction of this amendment at this time. Therefore, the Chair would suggest that after this particular amendment is dealt with, another member of your caucus would then be able to be in a position to move the one that was previously submitted to the Chair.

Thank you.

Debate Continued

MR. SPEAKER: Now we're on the amendment, and the Chair recognizes Innisfail.

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a privilege to rise today and speak on the motion and the amendment. I felt really proud to be part of this committee from the inception and also on our own party task force on the Constitution. As our Deputy Premier stated, we went across the province, probably the most extensive public review that has ever been held in Alberta. It took place in, I think, May, June, and into September. Along with that we had a round table discussion with the aboriginal people on issues of concern to them.

I wish to mainly speak today on about two or three items, but the Leader of the Official Opposition prompted me to speak a little bit more. Maybe we'll start off with the aboriginal question. When we first started on that, I had quite some difficulty in accepting the inherent right of self-government without it being defined, and when I heard the hon. leader speak, if he was on the committee, I'd even have more problems accepting that because of the fact that he wants to take the decision of inherent self-government outside our Constitution, whatever they felt, or individuals. In his definition we could have 86 or 126 independent countries or provinces within Canada, whatever each tribe would like to describe as self-government.

4:40

In our proposal, in which I could go along with the inherent right of self-government, was the fact that it's recognized. This should be recognized within the definition of the Constitution within the framework of Canadian federalism. I think that's a key point to make, Mr. Speaker. Without that we would have much difficulty, I think, ever coming to a compromise or a function of federalism that would work. A great number of the people that we met at the round table on aboriginals wanted a definition before it was enshrined in the Constitution, and our proposal of the select committee on Canadian unity will enable this to happen.

The other area that I would like to speak on, too, in reference to the Leader of the Opposition, is the social charter. Mr. Speaker, this country is the envy of the world on a number of our social issues, including medicare, social services, and unemployment insurance. In fact, medicare was conceived and developed in the province of Saskatchewan under the then NDP government of Tommy Douglas. I agree that has evolved into a well-accepted part of Canadian character, but it developed without being in the Constitution. This has happened, and it evolved under our present form of government. I don't think it is necessary to put it in the Constitution.

I guess one of the reasons I would say that is that a Constitution should basically say what the government can't do to the people, and under the social charter it would be saying what the government has to do for the people. We can only have medicare, health care, or any of our social programs if we have an economy that can pay for it. We're having difficulty now in all levels of government providing the services we have, and we have to recognize that we can't bind a social charter into a Constitution that gives the government of the day, no matter who it is, no flexibility to provide the services they feel they can afford. If it is enshrined in the Constitution, it is very difficult to change and hard to get out of the Constitution. As we know in our present dilemma of changing the Constitution, we've only changed it a handful of times in 125 years. So, Mr. Speaker, I have great difficulty – and I accept the opposition's point of thinking that a lot of Albertans and people across Canada maybe now believe in the social charter. What he said was that a survey said they approve of it, but the fact is that most Canadians probably don't understand the difficulty, when it's written in the Constitution, of changing that aspect of services that have to be provided by the government.

Mr. Speaker, what I'd like to go on to is the second recommendation in our report, in reference to the equality of all Canadians. I think the key when we try to arrive at a Constitution that is good for all Canadians is the equality of Canadians no matter where they live, inside Quebec, P.E.I., or the Northwest Territories. It's stated clearly in our recommendation 2 that

the Constitution must reflect and embody the equality of the people of Canada and existence of equal provinces.

. . . the concept of equality must take into account historical, cultural or economic realities; that the concept of equality is sometimes better served through different rather than uniform treatment.

What that says, as has been the tradition in Canada, is that some of our provinces have had different privileges than other provinces, but that doesn't mean that the other provinces don't have the right to get that privilege. So I think when we're talking about the whole Constitution, we have to keep that in the back of our minds, the aspect of equality among all Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, that moves me into Senate reform. There we'll talk about equality of the provinces. I think it's fundamental that equality of the provinces could be embedded with a triple E Senate. In any federation other than Germany we have what we call equal representation of Senators in the upper House. The only country in the world that has a Senate like ours or which is close is, like I say, Germany. They have a difference between five Senators, I think it is, or whatever their upper House is, and three in the smallest province. Australia, the United States, and New Zealand have an equal number of members in the upper House.

I did some number crunching in the United States. If you took 19 of the smallest populated states and added up their population, it wouldn't quite equal the population of California. In those 19 states they would be able to have 38 Senators to California's two. That's to illustrate the difference between ours, with P.E.I. and Ontario, where we hear that it's not fair that P.E.I. has the same number of Senators as Ontario. In the United States it has worked. When there are 38 Senate seats for the 19 smallest states in the United States, having less population than all of California, California doesn't seem to complain. As the Deputy Premier said, the Senate should reflect the equality of provinces, and until we get an equal number of Senators – elected Senators I think is a given; it should be a given. I think the most difficult part will be defining the effective part of the E. I believe that with consultation with the other provinces and the federal government, the effective part can be worked out. In matters where the provinces

have sole jurisdiction, the Senate should have a veto power, and where the matter is of federal jurisdiction, they would only have a suspensive power.

I guess another part in the elected part I'd like to mention briefly is that our federal minister responsible for Constitutional Affairs, the Hon. Joe Clark, has mentioned that he feels he's come a long ways in giving us the elected part of the E. I would just suggest that if we don't get the elected part of the E, Canadians would be extremely upset, because the vast majority of Canadians already accept the elected part as a given. To me, Mr. Speaker, a triple E Senate being equal, effective, and elected is the glue that could bring this country closer together. We in western Canada and particularly in Alberta have been accused of trying to tear the country apart by our tough stand on this triple E Senate. I just have a totally different view of that. I feel that the equal part of the Senate will unite Canada and make one of the most dramatic changes in the years to come if it comes about.

4:50

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to mention a little bit about Quebec and its distinct society clause and how it's protected in the Senate. We recommend what we call "subject to a double majority" in the Senate, where we would need a majority of the Senate plus a majority of the French-speaking Senators on any matters which pertain to their culture, language, or their civil law. So Quebec would not need a veto. With a double majority in the Senate, it could be in a sense a veto, protected within an equal Senate.

Mr. Speaker, I did mention the Quebec distinct society recommendations. I think probably one of the reasons we're in the whole debate on the Constitution is the fact that Quebec did not sign the '82 Constitution, and I think the very minimum that Quebec would accept is recognition of the distinct society clause in the three matters of language, culture, and civil law. In our discussions with Albertans throughout this process, I believe that Albertans will accept that aspect of the distinct society clause. I know that in the Meech Lake affair, special status was not acceptable and still is not acceptable, but I'm quite sure that Albertans will accept the distinct society clause.

Mr. Speaker, as was mentioned earlier, when we were in the public hearings, we had a number of other issues come before us. Most of them we put as issues that could be dealt with further in a committee that we've suggested we're going to have for parliamentary reform. At other times the Charter of Rights: national standards, the distribution of responsibilities could all take place in a further round of constitutional discussions. In fact, some of them could go on outside the Constitution. The distribution of powers could be worked out between the various provinces and the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to say again that I was pleased to be part of this report. I feel that the majority of the Albertans I've talked to have been very pleased with this report. The layout of the proposal was easy for them to understand, and I had very favourable comments and approval of the all-party select committee on this report.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I consider it to be an honour and a great privilege to be able to take part in this debate today in the Legislative Assembly on the select special committee report.

Just for a change, perhaps, I thought I would like to speak to the amendment that was put forward by my colleague the Leader

of the Opposition. May I first, however, associate myself with the remarks made by the leader of the Liberal Party when he praised the work of the Chair of this committee, the Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs. We who had that experience all came to know him as a sometimes tough but very effective chairperson. It's a difficult job to chair meetings involving not just MLAs, who can occasionally get unruly, as no doubt you know, Mr. Speaker, but also the general public, who were involved in these hearings. It takes a gentle touch on occasion, and sometimes you get awkward and volatile situations. Also, the co-Chair, the hon. Member for Drumheller, since we split into two panels, did the same work, and he did it well. One of the nice things about being on a committee like that is you get to know more about some of your colleagues. As we traveled on buses and planes, in restaurants and whatnot, we got to know one another quite well, and certainly the late Member for Calgary-Buffalo. It was a privilege for me to have the opportunity to spend time with him in that committee before his passing. It says something good about our political system that MLAs from all parties and parliamentarians in other jurisdictions can get together and work through complex and difficult problems in long hours and get things done.

You know, there is kind of a fraud in our parliamentary system. Because we need to differentiate ourselves from other candidates in other parties, we tend, sometimes unnecessarily, to run one another down and to exaggerate our differences. I think this process does show that it is possible, under the right circumstances, for people who look at things differently and come from different angles to arrive at a place which is acceptable to all of us and to a broad range of people who elected us. That says something very good about the potential of our system.

The amendment before us today speaks of the need to work toward a consensus on Canadian constitutional matters, and that's very much part of the process we've gone through, and it speaks of the spirit of nation building. Now, I recall remarking on the day - I forget the exact date - when we finally completed this report that we had reached the end of one road, which was the road of preparing the report, which proved to be the start of another, perhaps even more difficult and challenging road. Of course, that other road is the one that the minister is involved in with his colleagues across the country. Some liken it to another Meech Lake process, but I think that's very unfair and very misleading, because two things are different. One is that we have had perhaps the most extensive consultation process, certainly that I have experienced, in our country's history at every different level, involving not just this committee but federal conferences, other committees, other provinces, matters outlined by the Leader of the Opposition. The second and I think very, very important difference is that in this round of negotiations there are representatives from the territories and representatives from the aboriginal community who are involved on a day-to-day basis, and that is a very significant change.

Now, I understand that the process comes to Edmonton later this week. We're certainly pleased and proud to be able to host them. What the Leader of the Opposition is doing in this amendment is speaking to the next step, which was also referred to by the Liberal Party. What we need is to bring this report into the context of what's happening today and project that forward into our future.

Now, the report itself has very many good features in it. I think the Leader of the Opposition said that it's a fair reflection of what was said at public hearings. You can't reflect accurately on the hearings without publishing the transcripts of the hearings themselves, which we did, but of course that would be not very

accessible and not a very powerful document at all. I believe the majority on the committee and in many cases the entire committee came to a very workmanlike and workable summation of what was heard in that public hearing process.

There were some tense moments, particularly at the end. The members of my party on that committee felt very strongly that once a draft report hit the table, we were doing business which ought to be done in public, and we took strong action in support of that position by walking out of the committee on one day. Now, I know we were criticized by some for that. We were not joined by the other opposition party. They felt that a closed-door process was appropriate in terms of dealing with the report. We didn't. We believed that public business must be done in public, and the actual writing and amending of a report is indeed public business. I'm at a loss to understand those who pretend to have a small "r" reform agenda in this place on a daily basis. When push comes to shove and you really have to take action on behalf of your beliefs, where were they? Where were the Liberals? Well, Mr. Speaker, they were there behind closed doors fiddling around with the report. The next time I hear them talk about open government, perhaps I'll remind people of that particular occasion.

5:00

Now, when it came to the point of amending the report, there were quite a large number of matters in which we had felt that the text of the report, which was written by staff, did not fully and adequately take into account all of the circumstances. I want to highlight a few of those, particularly the ones that I think are especially important.

In the area of aboriginal rights it has been mentioned that there is recognition of inherent rights to self-government for aboriginal people, which is well and good, but as with so many things, when you read it carefully, it has no remedy, no way to bring this matter to a successful conclusion. For the last 10 years the Constitution of Canada has provided for a general recognition and a negotiating process to define those rights. For one reason or another, all of the governments of Canada have not been able to come to an agreement with aboriginal people on that, so there's been a stalemate, a deadlock. Now, along came Brian Mulroney and the federal government and said, "Well, we'll do that again for another 10 years." I don't blame aboriginal people and others for saying, "We don't need another 10 years running around the mulberry bush." Unfortunately, the proposal had no deadlock-breaking mechanism. It was simply more of the proposal which is contained within the select special committee report. It has no deadlock-breaking mechanism, so in fact it could be an unlimited series of discussions and negotiations followed by nothing.

My colleague for Edmonton-Strathcona drafted a proposal based on contract law and collective bargaining law for a stalemate-breaking process, the ability of the parties to the negotiations to declare a stalemate and to have some third-party intervention, not to make it justiciable immediately but to work in that way, which took it from the category of what is essentially an empty gesture into a category of something that would be real and substantial. For reasons they are perhaps best equipped to explain, the Liberals and the Conservatives voted against that proposal.

There was another on the social covenant. Again, it was mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition in his remarks. I would like to address why a social covenant or a social charter is important. It's important not just because citizens need to have an assurance that their governments will continue to provide benefits, although that's important. I think I would remind all members that the origin of a social charter is with the European Economic Community. They did that at the time of economic integration in

Europe to try to prevent unscrupulous employers from locating in low-wage countries, where they could take jobs away from people in higher wage countries and where there were no benefits. What they said is that if you're going to be part of our economic union, you need to have a base minimum of protection for your people. As we go into negotiations with Mexico now in the North American free trade agreement, coupling onto the Canada/U.S. trade deal, it becomes fundamentally and crucially important that we have that protection for our workers. If we think we've lost a lot of jobs today, wait till you see what happens when they start moving down the Maquiladoras, where they make eight bucks a day, compared with the kind of wages that you have to have to live and to raise a family in Canada. That's where your social charter and your social covenant become important.

You know, there are many models to work from. There's the European charter. There's the model of the international convention on trade union rights, collective bargaining rights. Again, we could not convince the Conservatives of that, and to my shock and horror the Liberal Party voted against that one too, which I think is kind of astounding. Maybe if you spend enough time behind closed doors with the Tories, you start to think like them; I don't know.

Then we get to the question of identifying our national identity, which is an extremely important aspect of this constitutional process. The point has been made many times that the Constitution is more than laws and regulations; it's also something that gives us an emotional attachment to our country. We inserted some language which I thought was beyond controversy, to the effect that we should recognize the dignity and well-being of every person in our country, that we should make a commitment publicly to fairness, equality, and democracy. Well, the government opposed that, and – would you believe it? – the Liberals opposed that one too. We weren't able to get everything we wanted; that's for sure.

But there were a number of things that were approved by the committee, and I think that should be recognized as well. The expanded notion of equality that's there in clause 2 of the report: the way it's written now is a very realistic appraisal of what equality means in our country. It doesn't mean the same treatment for everybody; it means recognizing the facts as they are and working with them. I congratulate the members of all parties for supporting that. Clause 9, recognizing equal status for the territories upon achieving provincehood. Also the much stronger language that we now have on aboriginal rights: it's directive language that says these things must be included, not shall be or may be, and those I think were strengthening improvements that were proposed by the New Democrats and agreed to by the other parties. The idea of aboriginal participation in the constitutional talks, which is a reality and is happening, was agreed to as well. The idea of having gender balance on federal boards, commissions, and agencies is a thoughtful and excellent suggestion which was agreed to by the various other parties as well. So there were a number of improvements and strengthening that took place in that process, and we should all be glad of it.

The amendment also deals with the question of our tactics in the future. There's no doubt that Senate reform is a very important priority of Albertans. We all heard that; it's a priority of all members of this Legislature. An elected Senate can be a tough sell with some people. I think we all know that. When people look, for example, at the pay and benefits of politicians, and you come along and say, "We want to give you some more elected politicians," there's a lot of people who right there say, "Well, gee, is that what I really need around here?" We know the existing Senate does not contribute to our political system. The fight that's

on right now really is between a strengthened and reformed Senate and abolition. There are those in our country who support abolition, and we have to be very careful that what we do as Albertans does not push more people into the abolition camp, but to try to make sure that our tactics and our strategies are supportive of Senate reform. I heard Gary Filmon, the Premier of Manitoba, on the radio today saying he's very optimistic about the chances of a triple E Senate. He said that he had had some discussions about Senate reform with Bob Rae, the Premier of Ontario, which were very encouraging. I note that the B.C. committee report came out the other day supporting Senate reform. So there are a lot of things that are going in that direction.

If I have a concern about what's in the report, it's primarily in the area of effectiveness. There's a lot of reference in the report to the 1985 committee that was chaired by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, the Member for Calgary-Currie, as if this prepackaged position should be the one. Well, in 1992 you're not necessarily going to be able to sell a 1985 model as being brand-new, right? I mean, this is a 1985-model proposal. It doesn't matter how you dress it up, it's still a 1985 model, and you're not going to convince anybody it's a 1992 model.

I believe that what's wanted in this report, the more I look at it, is protection in Ottawa for the provincial governments. Now, it is true that provincial governments and their legislative authority need protection, but it's also true that people out there in our society need protection as well. When we start hacking away at it and saying they can't introduce money Bills, they can't veto things that are in federal jurisdiction, only things that are in provincial jurisdiction or a special veto on concurrent powers, we're really looking at protecting the rights of the provincial governments. Whereas I would hope, and I think a lot of Canadians would hope, that the power of the Senate would go beyond that, that it would be kind of a counterbalance to the distortions of the majority in the House of Commons, where what you get is a majority of first past the post, heavily biased towards central Canada. And we want to try to counterbalance that majoritarian, white male position with something that's different, another side to the coin. I'm not so certain that we've got the right model in terms of the effectiveness portion of the E, in any case.

I would say that the Premier's remarks – I think it was at the Rotary Club in Edmonton – did not advance our cause as far as Senate reform is concerned. They tended in the main to isolate Alberta, and it got so bad that the former Premier had to enter the debate and try to put a different perspective on the way Albertans view these very delicate and sensitive matters across the country. I know one thing: if we're going to have a deal that will save our country – and I believe this is among the most important tasks of our generation – it has to be acceptable to three groups of people. It has to be acceptable to aboriginal people, it has to be acceptable to Quebec, and it has to be acceptable to people in the rest of Canada.

5:10

If we stray from believing that we have to work out something that is good for all three, then I think we're going to have problems. That's why this particular amendment, which has the effect of giving the government a mandate to help draft solutions, is so important, because that is exactly the work that's going on. I have no idea; I'm not briefed on a regular basis. The job of the members of the committee more or less ended at the point that we finished our report, and the job goes to somebody else to participate in the drafting. What we're saying is that there's a lot of strong language in this report, Alberta in a New Canada: Visions of Unity, and strong language is appropriate under these circum-

stances because these are things that Albertans feel strongly about. But we're saying also to the government that you now have an obligation, a responsibility, and you are accountable to make sure that you're working together with the other provinces toward a consensus in a spirit of nation-building. I really think that's an extension of the proposition that's before us, an extension that will be a particularly helpful one for the government to work with.

I want to say a very brief word about the environment. You know, the question of the environment did come up in a lot of the hearings. People wonder whether we'll have a country, and they wonder whether it will be in an atmosphere that has – well, I think the words I would best like to use come from William Tilleman when he talks about Canadians having a right

to clean air, pure water, productive soils, healthy fish and wildlife and to the conservation of the unique scenic, historic, recreational, aesthetic and economic values of these and Canada's other natural resources.

In the federal proposals to date, the ones that came from the federal government, there were 19 pages of proposals on the Constitution; on the environment, three and a half lines. It gives you an idea of what the balance, or lack of balance, is in the minds of the federal government thinkers. I really think that while the jurisdiction is addressed briefly in this report, we should be thinking about putting environmental rights in the Constitution. Again in the words of Bill Tilleman:

It is the responsibility of Canada and the various provinces and territories as public trustees to safeguard [our environmental] rights for the benefit of present and future Canadians.

I think Canadians are ready for that. I also think they're ready for freedom of information and whistle blower's protection and a lot of other Bills that I've introduced in the Legislature, but it's time we addressed that in the Constitution for the reason that the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry said, which is that there is some confusion in our Constitution. He takes the view that the federal government needs to have stronger powers than the provinces, and I tend to agree with him that there should be federal paramountcy in this area, but there should also be protection, rights, for Canadians, and I believe that's something that we can work on as well.

In summation, I would like to suggest that the committee report, the life of it, will be strengthened by approving the amendment, and I therefore commend it to hon. members. Thank you.

MS BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted as well to have an opportunity to speak to the report, *Visions of Unity*. It was a tremendous opportunity that I had, and I share some of the comments that have been made by other members in this Assembly. The value to me personally was with respect to the understanding I had of constitutional issues and, as importantly, how Albertans feel about them, but also to give me a resolve, which I didn't have before, with respect to coming to the point of solution on our constitutional endeavours as Canadians.

First off, let me say thank you to the Premier for allowing me to be part of the committee. Certainly from Albertans we heard a good deal about their pessimism about the country, we heard a good deal about their frustrations with the country, but more importantly we heard about their aspirations for the country. As an Albertan, as a Canadian, as a member of this Assembly, I am very grateful for that opportunity.

I, too, want to make a special mention of the Member for Calgary-*Buffalo*. He and I had some wonderful debates following the presentations that we heard from Albertans. I will remember those conversations and those passions with great recognition of

the kind of contribution the Member for Calgary-*Buffalo* made and, I think, continues to make in terms of the resolve.

Also, my participation in the committee strengthened my resolve to work towards the goals of unity, equality, and respect that were the first and foremost recommendations of our committee. I would like to just quote from the French version of the committee report, where we said:

Elle doit refléter les croyances et valeurs fondamentales de notre société et exprimer, entre autres, l'engagement des Canadiens envers un Canada fort et uni, le principe d'égalité des citoyens et des provinces, notre engagement envers le bien-être social et économique de tous les Canadiens, et notre respect des caractéristiques diverses de la société canadienne.

What our report did, Mr. Speaker, was define the principles by which Albertans approach this issue of constitutional reform, and those principles are, I believe, the major contribution of our report to the debate.

I also want to say thank you to some of the participants. At the risk of naming one of them, I will name Dr. Clement Leibovitz, who spoke to the committee when we were in Edmonton, because he spoke with some of the most wonderful language that I heard in the whole time of the constitutional presentations. He spoke about the "spiritual unity" of Canada, he spoke about our responsibility to history, and he spoke about contemplating unacceptable tomorrows with respect to dividing the country.

On the issue of the amendment specifically, Mr. Speaker, I think the question that we have to put is the whole question of the consensus. I certainly believe as a member of the committee that all of the proposals we have are with respect to developing a consensus nationally. That is the commitment we made. If it means that we have to pull away from certain recommendations that we've made that we believe enhance the consensus, that we believe enhance the goal of national unity, I'd have some concern about it, but perhaps we'll get more explanation as the amendment is presented further by other members of the party.

In terms of the value of the report, certainly we said that first and foremost the value of the report was the commitment that Albertans have, which the Deputy Premier and chairman of our committee spoke to, and that was to the value of unity. Really, it puts our constitutional discussions into a context. There is nothing more important in this debate than the issue of unity. Canada is not Canada if it breaks up. Historian Arthur Lower has said that in every generation Canadians are called on to redefine the miracle of their political existence, and that time has come for our generation, I believe, to see the miracle that is Canada. Our parents and theirs before them saw the miracle of Canada in a different light. Many of them had to fight in a war where Canada's very existence was challenged. Our own generation has by and large been pretty well treated in and by this nation, and our commitment to being Canadians is really what is being tested now and where we are being called upon to serve.

5:20

In terms of the issue of national unity, first of all we have to recognize that national unity is being threatened. It is not an abstract debate. Public life and particularly nation building have, in my view, been defined by the issue of winners and losers for far too long. That's just not good enough for Canada in the '90s. The issues in Canada are not about the dichotomy. They are not about the issue of whether to separate or not to separate. They are not about east versus west. Rather, Canada is about the substance in between those two realities. It is about the balance of competing principles. And Canada is about respecting the diversity that exists in our country.

I believe, frankly, that that's ultimately what the '90s are about and what this report tries to reflect, that as we prepare to enter a new millennium, Canada is capable of being a model of unity, a model of equality, a model of respect, principles essential to tackling issues as diverse as Canadian constitutional reform all the way over to issues as complex as family violence. Those are the principles by which we have to approach these kinds of issues, issues that perhaps we have covered up for too long, issues that perhaps we have provided some sense of solution for but not a genuine commitment to a quality of life in Canada that we want our children to grow up in. The first and foremost, then, of the principles embodied in the report is that of national unity.

The second principle of the report is the principle of equality. The question becomes: why is it so important? Why is equality important in the constitutional and other debates? Well, I've referred to it before in my earlier remarks, but why we need equality is basically so we won't have dominance. That's the issue of equality. It's not whether there's going to be a hierarchical society, because as we look at what's happening around the world, we are seeing hierarchies crumble all over. The issue is equality. Whether it is country to country, culture to culture, employee to employer, the issue is equality, and we must strive to enhance the value of equality throughout our working on the Constitution.

I am reminded of a quote by the chairman of General Electric in terms of the issue of equality as it affects new management models in the world, Mr. Speaker. The chairman of General Electric is John Welch, and he recently acknowledged that the private sector can no longer accommodate those

who typically force performance of people rather than inspire it. The autocrat, the big shot, the tyrant. . . . in an environment where we must have every good idea from every man and woman in the organization, we cannot afford management styles that suppress and intimidate.

It doesn't mean that everyone has to be the same. Is that what equality's all about? No, assuredly not, Mr. Speaker. Are men and women the same? No, thank goodness, they are not. Are we all of equal value in terms of contributing to the world? Yes, I think in terms of how we approach the world, our ability to contribute is equal. Does it mean that all our contributions as individuals are the same? No. The issue of equality is one that regardless of race, regardless of religion, regardless of disability, regardless of whatever, we all come together as Canadians equal to one another, as provinces equal to one another, and that is the principle that we believe is enshrined in many of our recommendations.

Canada, I would argue, is a model of equality, and though the issue has surfaced in our proposals on Senate reform, it's not a new issue in Canada. Let's look at it in the Senate reform proposal that we have before us. Our proposal on Senate reform is a means by which we believe national unity can be enhanced. That was why we had a unanimous endorsement, I believe, in terms of our model for constitutional reform in the report. We believe it's going to keep us united. We believe, in fact, it will enhance unity, and we're going to work very hard through all our offices to ensure that the understanding of Canadians as to why we feel so strongly about it will be enhanced.

The principle of equality has been slow to gain acceptance in some parts of Canada, despite the advice of some pretty great statesmen, like Sir Wilfrid Laurier. When he was talking about provincial representation on the Senate, he said:

What I would insist on is that each province should be represented by an equal number of Senators, that each province should stand in the

Senate on the same footing, and that each province whether it be small or big should have a voice in the legislation, not according to the numerical strength of its population but according to its provincial entity.

I agree with the Deputy Premier when he describes the model of federalism that we have come to in Canada. We can't have either/or in terms of representation of the majority. It's not the only issue in Canada. We have the House of Commons, which, as he has indicated earlier today, reflects the democratic principle in Canada, the principle of one person, one vote. We've got that in the House of Commons. But we also have a Senate, and what our proposals are attempting to do is ensure that the federal principle is embodied in the Senate, where the equality of the provinces is reflected. Put another way, I would be as upset if Prince Edward Island were threatening to leave the Confederation as I am that Quebec is. That is the issue of equality amongst the provinces. I'm going to quote the Deputy Premier when he said,

The democratic and federal principles are reconciled and reflected by these two Houses acting together as a single Parliament expressing the national will.

Both are part of that expression, which is why I believe the principle of equality must be reflected in our Senate proposal.

The equality principle is also reflected not only in our Senate proposal but in the work Alberta did in the '82 round of discussions with respect to the amending formula. The amending formula now embodied in the Constitution is embodied on a principle of equality. It is seven out of 10 provinces – it doesn't ask which ones – and a further test of population. Although some may argue that the further test of the population is not the issue of equality, I would argue that the principle of equality has been reflected.

The Canada Health Act, another model that embodies the principle of equality. Regardless of income, regardless of how long you've been a Canadian, the system is there for all of us to access equally.

Mr. Speaker, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 10 years old this month, is a document in Canada which says Canadians are equal with respect to race, religion, creed, all of those things. Those are values which are Canadian, and I would argue that Alberta's positioning on the Senate is totally consistent with those fundamental issues in Canada, one of which is equality.

In view of the hour, Mr. Speaker, because I do want to go on, I would beg leave to adjourn debate.

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the motion, those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Carried.

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, I move that when the members assemble this evening, they do so in Committee of Supply.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Having heard the motion, those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. The motion carries.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:28 p.m.]