

8:59 a.m.

Saturday, May 25, 1991

[Chairman: Mr. Horsman]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ladies and gentlemen, it's now 9 o'clock, and I'd just like to make a couple of brief remarks before we commence the discussions.

This is the second day of the public hearing process of this half of the panel of the select special committee of the Alberta Legislature. There are 16 members in total representing all the political parties in the Alberta Legislature. One half of the panel is in Calgary doing exactly what we're doing here. The other half is here before you. During the course of today we will be hearing the representations of people who have asked for a time period. Yesterday, in addition to those who had requested the specific time to come before us, we heard 10 people at the end of the day who made, if I may say so, walk-on presentations. Because of time commitments of the members, however, we are not going to be able to do that at the end of the afternoon, and we must conclude sharp at 5 o'clock today. If there's anybody present who wishes to make a presentation who's not on the list today, would you please give your names to the registration desk. The committee is going to make sure that anyone who wishes to make presentations can do so, and another date and time will be made available to the public for that purpose.

At the outset I should tell you that I'm Jim Horsman. I'm the member of the Legislature for Medicine Hat, and I'm the chairman of the select special committee. I'd just like to quickly go around the table and have the other members introduce themselves briefly.

MR. McINNIS: John McInnis. I represent Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MRS. GAGNON: Yolande Gagnon. I represent Calgary-McKnight.

MR. ADY: Jack Ady, the MLA for Cardston.

MR. BRADLEY: Fred Bradley, MLA for Pincher Creek-Crowsnest.

MR. SEVERTSON: Gary Severtson, MLA for Innisfail.

MS BARRETT: Pam Barrett, MLA for this riding, Edmonton-Highlands.

MR. ROSTAD: Ken Rostad, MLA, Camrose.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The secretary of the committee, seated to my left, is Garry Pocock, and we have staff available for anyone who wishes additional information.

We'd like to commence at the outset and welcome Her Worship Mayor Reimer from the city of Edmonton and ask her to join us at the table. The sound system: we had a few glitches yesterday. If anybody cannot hear any of the presentations or comments and questions by the panel, please let us know, and we will try and accommodate you.

Welcome, Mayor Reimer.

MS REIMER: Thank you. Good morning, Mr. Minister and members of the committee. I'd like to first and foremost thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today on behalf of

Edmonton city council and indeed on behalf of the people who live in our great city.

As the city of Edmonton's submission to this committee details, people living in large cities make up the majority of Canada's population today. That's in sharp contrast to the scene at our country's birth when fully 81 percent of Canadian citizens lived in rural areas. Given the shape of 19th century Canada, it's understandable that the British North America Act of 1867 focused on provincial and federal rather than municipal roles. Unfortunately, the Canadian Constitution as patriated in 1982 failed to reflect the intervening century's massive urban shift. Cities and, indeed, municipalities still receive no recognition and only passing mention in the Constitution.

In recent decades Canadian municipalities have shouldered an ever expanding array of services, but because of their constitutional position, municipal governments lack the financial and legal authority in most cases to manage their own affairs. The city of Edmonton believes it's time to redress that imbalance. It is time to give cities the means, financial and legal, to accompany their growing responsibilities, and it's time to take the unnecessary guesswork out of being a city or a municipality. As part of the national debate regarding the future of our country, we must review the role and relationship of municipalities with the two other levels of government.

Today the city of Edmonton asks the support of this select committee for three recommendations: we ask the committee, first, to endorse and approve the principle of recognizing and giving status to Canadian municipalities in the Constitution; secondly, to support a mechanism for participation and consultation by a broad cross section of interests; and thirdly, to recommend including municipalities as one of those participating interests. Allow me to expand briefly on each point.

The city of Edmonton recommends that this committee endorse and approve the principle of amending the Constitution to recognize and to give status to Canadian municipalities. Canada does in fact operate with three levels of government, yet the only constitutional mention of municipal government institutions, section 92(8), gives provincial governments exclusive authority to make laws governing municipalities. Thus, the Constitution Act contains no guidelines outlining if, when, or how municipalities should be created or what core powers or authority they should be delegated. This constitutional void enables a province to alter municipal powers, responsibilities, and structures at any point. No legal requirement exists for agreement or even discussion with affected cities or in fact with affected municipalities.

In recent decades the federal and provincial governments have passed down or shed services to municipal governments. Edmonton for one has felt those effects. For example, the provincial family and community support services funding has dropped from 80 percent of cost in 1981 to 54 percent in 1989. Provincial deferral of part of its transportation grant in effect reduced Edmonton's 1991 funding for capital projects. Meanwhile, the federal and provincial governments have unilateral power to pass taxes and fees to municipalities regardless of needs or time lines. Again, examples illustrate my point.

The city of Edmonton set its 1991 operating budget last December. Two months later the federal government added \$2.8 million through increased UI premiums, and, even later, provincial increases added another half a million dollars. The city, by contrast, cannot collect or increase tax revenues from other levels of government. Through the municipal tax payment program the province of Alberta now provides the city of Edmonton with grants in lieu of taxes for its properties in the

cities, but the weakness of that arrangement became clear in 1990, when the province unilaterally decided to reduce the grant amount; in effect, not to pay their full amount of taxes to the municipality. True, the province heard our protest. Under the proposed Municipal Government Act Alberta would pay the full value of its property taxes, but if passed, this legislation itself could be changed without municipal consent. True, cities can lobby, persuade, and petition, but we lack the position to go beyond these stopgap measures.

A more fundamental solution is needed for this fundamental problem. Constitutional change offers the only way to clearly and consistently define municipal roles and authority. Any other method would continue to leave municipalities entirely dependent on legislation passed by other levels of government.

The city of Edmonton is not alone in its concern. Among the cities adding their voices to ours are Calgary, Vancouver, and Montreal. Next month delegates from all major Canadian cities will consider a resolution calling for a constitutional conference to address this issue.

Precedents do exist for constitutional recognition of municipal governments. Several countries include some guarantee of autonomy for a local government: Japan, Greece, India, and Germany, to name a few. We are not here to recommend a specific model for constitutional definition of Canadian municipalities. That would be premature. First we need more information about available alternatives and how they might be applied in our context.

9:09

Preliminary study indicates the alternatives for a constitutional presence fall into three basic groups. One, a purely symbolic statement regarding the existence and importance of municipal governments. We believe this approach would fail to resolve the real financial and practical problems facing our cities. Two, leaving municipalities under the general direction of the provinces but with a limited number of responsibilities. This alternative would not change the basic structure of Canadian federalism with its two levels of government, but it would clarify the relationship between cities and provinces. Three, giving municipal governments equal status as partners in Confederation with their own allocated powers. This option would significantly alter the number and size of the partners in Confederation.

Let me reiterate: the city of Edmonton does not advocate any one option at this time, but we do seek more than a symbolic statement. It's too early to specify, however, the exact dimensions of a workable solution.

Let's turn briefly now to the city's second recommendation to this committee: that the committee support a mechanism, such as a constituent assembly, for participation and consultation by a broad cross section of interests. The federal and provincial governments have the only formal voice regarding the Constitution, but significant segments of Canada do not feel represented by either of those constitutional partners. The city of Edmonton believes debate about our country's future must involve individuals and groups who were not at the table during previous constitutional debates. As you know, the constituent assembly is receiving attention as a way to draw various sectors, regions, and perspectives to a common table. We support the constituent assembly as one means to that end. Certainly it may not be the only means, but our commitment to the goal of broad-based participation stands.

Closely related to this point is our final recommendation: that the committee's support include a provision that municipalities should be represented at such a forum. Municipalities have a

big stake in the constitutional debate that's sweeping our country. For us it offers an opportunity to gain the foundation we need to serve our residents well. Many pressures facing municipal governments result from the absence of any defined role in the Constitution. As long as municipalities are not recognized as a legitimate level of government, they lack a voice in constitutional debate. As long as cities have no voice, they are unlikely to play a partnership role in shaping reforms that affect their future.

As that statement indicates, the city of Edmonton believes this discussion is necessary for the long-term health of municipal governments and the citizens we represent. It is also necessary for the long-term health of our province and our country. Why? First, because more than half of Canada's citizens live within municipal boundaries. In fact, Edmonton alone, with a population of 605,000, is home to more people than either Newfoundland or Prince Edward Island. Cities, even larger cities, have less authority and flexibility than provinces even if they speak on behalf of more citizens.

Secondly, municipalities can point the way to better use of public dollars. Cities meet people on the streets, at their homes, in their lives. They are in a unique position to understand crucial connections among residents' needs. The police officer responding to a domestic dispute experiences firsthand the effects of the poverty cycle. Experience in Edmonton underlines that fact. The Mayor's Task Force on Safer Cities, for example, has documented crucial links between poverty, self-esteem, housing, health, education, crime: links that will help us set priorities and wisely allocate resources. Local wisdom can benefit other levels of government as well. Take the housing initiatives recently announced in Edmonton and Calgary, for example. Thanks to groundwork initiated by committed residents and to partnership among all three levels of government, those dollars will meet identified needs. Well-informed intergovernmental partnerships must become the norm rather than the exception as needs expand and budgets become even tighter. Cities serve as valuable partners.

In summary, municipal governments play a major role in Canadian society and in intergovernmental relations, yet we lack the clear authority to manage our own affairs, the authority to make the best use of time, talent, and dollars, both public and private. It is the city of Edmonton's position that debate on the relationship between our province and its cities is one key to charting Alberta's future. Further, municipal status must enter the federal debate for the good of Canada's future. We ask you to join us in calling for that debate, in seeking municipal partnership at the table, and in endorsing the principle of recognizing municipalities in the Constitution.

Thank you for listening, and now I'd like to invite your questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Mayor Reimer. Questions? Yes, John McInnis.

MR. McINNIS: Mayor Reimer, I take it from your presentation that the city is not interested in dramatically expanding the responsibilities of municipalities; rather the access to revenues and tools to do the job that's set out for you. Is that more or less it?

MS REIMER: Well, I think a very clear definition of roles. In many cases over the past we've seen this downloading, which is having municipalities take on more and more with a limited financial ability to do so. I think it's a question of identifying

responsibilities among the different levels and then looking at how we can work in partnership. I think the housing example, which was a good collaborative effort, is a case in point. Housing specifically isn't a municipal responsibility; nevertheless, through zoning legislation and those kinds of things, we can affect things, but we can also be there at the grass roots to identify what those problems are and prioritize them so you get the most effective approach to spending taxpayers' dollars.

MR. McINNIS: Just on the revenue side, looking at the Constitution of Canada, the federal government can raise money by any mode or system of taxation; the province is limited to direct taxation within the province for provincial purposes. Would you see municipalities given a separate taxation power, or would you rather see it in the way of sharing overall revenues between the three levels of government?

MS REIMER: Well, certainly the position of municipalities for many, many years has been revenue sharing. We feel that sharing of income tax is likely the least regressive form of taxation that we have. That's been a consistent position by the AUMA, I think the FCM, and our own municipality.

MR. McINNIS: Just one more, if I may. The constituent assembly: is it city council's position that the city should be able to appoint representatives to a constituent assembly, or should they be elected the same way all of us are from the universal suffrage? Is there a position on that?

MS REIMER: We haven't looked at it that definitively. I think we're just saying we need a municipal voice there. We have our existing organizations as well in place, the FCM and the AUMA. Municipalities need that voice.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, Mrs. Gagnon.

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mayor Reimer, I know that you haven't developed all of your specifics, but have you given any thought to the size of the city which would get this kind of new responsibility and also new authority? Anything over 10,000? Anything over 50,000?

MS REIMER: I think it's a question of recognition of the municipality's role no matter what the size. You know, I can look at some of the counties or towns that surround us. They, too, face the same kinds of dilemmas. If the province decides, as they did, not to pay their taxes this year, it hurts them too. So I think it's a question really for municipalities. Cities certainly play an important role in that, and I think, you know, that with the shift that needs to be recognized, but our view is that municipalities should be recognized regardless of size.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Other questions?
Gary Severtson.

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you. I guess what comes to my mind: if it's entrenched in the Constitution and 10 provinces and the federal government have to deal with municipalities right across the country, to make changes – as we know, we're talking about making changes to the Constitution now – don't you feel that it would be a lot easier if the municipalities dealt with the provinces in their area of responsibility rather than in the Constitution, where you have a multitude?

MS REIMER: Well, that maintains the status quo, sir, and I don't believe that's adequate. Right now we're very much creatures of the provincial government. They can do with us what they will, and that's the position we find untenable.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could I just make this point? In Alberta there are three different organizations representing municipalities; that is, the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, and the improvement districts organization. The municipalities in Alberta in effect have not been able to get their act together in uniting in one organization to represent the interests of all municipalities in this province, and it is my understanding that that situation may also be in place in other provinces in Canada. How do you see the Constitution changing that particular situation?

9:19

MS REIMER: Well, I think improvement districts or MDs or counties or whatever are again creations of the provincial government. It's you who have set the definitions as to what form and structure a municipality would have. You've got a great range, for instance, in the size of hamlets, in the size of counties, and again with improvement districts. We had a meeting earlier this week with representatives around the province to look at some very common issues, and a common theme did emerge, and that's the one of the downloading of responsibilities onto municipal government. I don't think there's anyone who would not advocate that case from any level of municipal government in this province.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, thank you. It's a very provocative notion. Amending the Constitution, as we're looking at now, is very complex in trying to get 11 governments to agree and with the territories of course making a valid claim to further participation in the process. I'm a little apprehensive about the ability to achieve constitutional change in the future if every municipality in the country were to be part of the process, but you make some very valid points about the responsibilities.

It reminds me, though, of my former colleague in the Alberta Legislature who also served as an alderman in Calgary, then went on to become an MLA, and then a Member of Parliament. John Kushner, now deceased, was well known for his malapropisms. A good guy, but he said: well, there's only one taxpayer: you and me. It makes the point, though, that we all do represent the same group of people and that there's only availability to one tax base.

Thank you very much, Mayor Reimer, for your presentation and for your thought-provoking comments.

MS REIMER: I'd just point out, Mr. Chairman, that we're asking that you give status. That doesn't mean you have everyone at the table with voices. I recognize the logistics of that. I would point out that many years ago the Prime Minister never met with the Premiers, there were never meetings with the various ministers, and that certainly changed. I think certainly something could happen in the province where the Premier and the ministers consult with the municipalities in a structured manner to develop policy.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

MS REIMER: Thank you.

MR. POCOCK: Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, our second presenter this morning is Fred Bentley.

MR. BENTLEY: Thank you. Members of the committee, I wish to first express my thanks to the Legislature and the committee and the people who are participating in these very important meetings. My name is Fred Bentley. I'm an agronomist, a professor emeritus of soil science. I represent myself here this morning, but through conversations I believe I represent a considerable number of people.

Thanks, or no thanks, to Meech Lake and Mulroney and some other associated events most politicians are now perceived as lacking in leadership and having self-serving, power-seeking, self-glorifying aspirations. As a result, there's currently great distrust among many people. Some of us seek ways and means to make our elected representatives more responsive to the wishes of the people. Copies of my submission have been distributed. I'm going to speak briefly about the things that are in bold face.

Let me first say loudly and without reservation that I want a lot of constitutional changes. Particularly I want a strong federal government. I am and was emphatically opposed to Meech Lake because it proposed to give more power to all provinces, not just to Quebec. I want a Canada where all citizens are free to establish residence, to live, and to work without any provincial limitations. I also want a Canada where regardless of ancestry or where one lives there are the same basic provisions or protections for education, employment, health, justice, and social services.

There are two aspects of Meech Lake I support: bilingualism, because it is essential to maintain Quebec in Canada; I also support the distinct society concept provided it is defined and then acceptable and also includes aboriginal peoples as distinct societies. I want Quebec to stay in Canada. If it is to go, then that's to be, but I'm unalterably opposed to special powers for Quebec other than the two I've mentioned. I'm specifically opposed to the provision for it to have special powers or privileges with respect to immigration.

If Quebec chooses to go, then the separation should be complete and based on the boundaries of 1867 with the possible exception of negotiated exchanges of land to provide a corridor from Ontario to eastern Canada. I don't think there's any possibility that Quebec would separate given the boundaries of 1867, because it would lose the bonanza of James Bay, which gives it financial security beyond any other state or province in North America for decades ahead.

Quebec is wrongly perceived as being financially favoured by the federal government. To correct that misinformation, I would like to see a constitutional requirement for there to be an annual state of Canada report, not unlike this OECD, in figures but very much simpler. It would inform Canadians about our governments, ourselves, and how we compare with others. I would have such state of Canada reports as an insertion in the income tax forms and available to anyone else who might desire to have copies.

I should like to see great changes in our election procedures. The principal objective would be to reduce the farcical bidding competitions that characterize our provincial and federal elections. Elections should be at fixed intervals, perhaps four or five years. Limit the number of years that MPs and MLAs could serve to perhaps 15 or 20 or 25. When candidates file their nominations, they should be required to file simultaneously a personal campaign platform, and political parties should similarly be required to file a platform for the campaign. There should be mechanisms for recall or impeachment of elected representa-

tives for appropriate cause, and a ban on reporting or holding polls for the six weeks before an election. If the Senate is retained, it should be elected, perhaps limited to two terms, and should have specific, meaningful responsibilities. In order to meet the disparity in populations, the number of Senators for the rest of Canada should be in the order of 50 percent more than the combined Senators from Ontario and Quebec. So we don't elect massive majorities in Legislatures or Parliaments from a minority of votes, change the voting system to either single, transferrable vote or preferential vote.

9:29

The federal and provincial governments have wretched grossly and repeatedly on treaties with our aboriginal peoples, or they have failed to make them. This week the European Parliament recorded criticism of Canada's treatment of its native peoples. The record of our governments in this area has been a humiliation and a disgrace to right-thinking Canadians. Constitutional changes should be made to terminate this, and that should be a highest priority.

I desire constitutional changes to give the federal government a greatly increased role, financial responsibility, and general responsibility in the area of education. We compare badly internationally in the school dropout area, the capability of our school leavers, and the facilities for some of our higher education. Improvements are essential if we are to be competitive, about which we talk so glibly and do so little effectively.

I want changes to give the federal government a greatly increased role, power, and responsibility in the area of the environment. It is arguable that on a per capita basis we are the worst polluters in the world. The European Parliament this week recorded concern about our environmental responsibilities.

I want constitutional changes to give the federal government responsibility and power to ensure that the justice system operates with necessary dispatch. Today's paper in Edmonton again reports that someone accused of a serious crime has had the charges stayed because he didn't appear in court within a reasonable time. This is intolerable.

Lastly, I want the federal government to have primary constitutional responsibility to improve labour laws and labour relations and to protect workers and the public. Some employers evade the spirit of fair employment. Combative relations between some unions and their employers are destructive, and some unions blatantly rip off the public and the economy.

Ladies and gentlemen, I've been in over 50 countries. This is the best country on earth that I know of. We have potential that is unequalled, and the divisiveness and disarray of recent years, and months especially, are dividing the country, endangering our future. Let us get together as one country and see that we attain our potential.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Questions? Pam Barrett, then Jack Ady.

MS BARRETT: Thanks. Thank you for a very thorough analysis. I have one question only. You position yourself with respect to Quebec and make it clear that you'd like Quebec to remain a part of Canada because it's part of the definition of Canada, but you say the one power you really don't want them to have any greater than they have right now is with respect to immigration. My question is this: given that in an unwritten form Quebec has had power to have more immigrants channeled to its province and specifically Francophone immigrants, would

you want that taken away, or would you want that left as status quo?

MR. BENTLEY: No. I may say that I am opposed to immigration of any kind, but I especially don't want the restrictive conditions that now apply, as you say unofficially, for Quebec. This should be one country with one standard for immigration and not by the present objectives.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could I just follow up on that? Mr. Bentley, it's not an unwritten agreement; it is a formal agreement between Quebec and Canada which was arrived at between the Trudeau government and Quebec. It was called the Cullen-Couture agreement. It is a formal agreement which in effect gave special status to Quebec for immigration matters under the aegis of Mr. Trudeau and his government.

MR. BENTLEY: Mr. Chairman, my response to that is that what the government of Canada has done, Canada can reverse if we have the will and if this is a majority preference.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But it's an agreement. Are you suggesting that one party can break an agreement without the consent of the other?

MR. BENTLEY: Is it a constitutional agreement?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, it is not.

MR. BENTLEY: Well, let's change it then.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, one of the principles of contract, whether it's between an individual - yourself and your neighbour - or governments at the federal level and the provincial level, is that you honour your commitments. You're suggesting that one party should be able to unilaterally walk away from an agreement.

MR. BENTLEY: In terms of this, when we're talking of constitutional change, I think it appropriate to make a constitutional change.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. I just wanted to be clear on that point.

MR. ADY: Mr. Bentley, I believe I heard you say in your presentation that people are under the erroneous understanding that Quebec has been favoured by Ottawa financially. I'm not sure how you could draw that conclusion when all the studies on that issue, specifically Prof. Mansell and other studies that have been done, clearly indicate that they've been a net benefactor. We look back to the days of our own national energy program when there were vast sums of money taken out of Alberta and laundered through Ottawa. During those years Quebec was a vast beneficiary, above the rest of the provinces in Canada. How do you draw the conclusion that they have never been favoured by Ottawa above other provinces financially?

MR. BENTLEY: I have seen the graph in the publication that was produced in connection with these hearings, and what you say is shown to be so there. I recently received from Edmonton MP Scott Thorkelson his quarterly report, and in there he has a table he attributes to the Fraser Institute which shows the total federal funding of government spending per capita in 1988. The

lowest was \$4,030 per capita to Alberta. The next lowest was \$4,219 per capita to Quebec. Ontario was \$5,330, and you go up mostly from there. B.C. is the only other province with less than \$5,000. These are more recent statistics than those in the publication that was distributed in preparation for these hearings.

MR. ADY: If I could ask you, what period of time is that? I believe I've seen that.

MR. BENTLEY: Nineteen eighty-eight.

MR. ADY: That may be true for 1988, but I'm talking about the last 15-year period.

MR. BENTLEY: Mr. Ady, I'm reminded of several years ago when there was very vehement criticism that Quebec was being favoured in the funding for regional development or some such. They had 148 different grants, Alberta had 13, Ontario had 27, and so forth. This was the basis of very sharp criticism. However, Prime Minister Trudeau in Regina pointed out that on a per capita basis Quebec was second lowest in the funds received under that program. A well-known news media man, Charles Lynch, said subsequently that it doesn't matter; Quebec still had more grants in numbers.

9:39

This is the kind of misinformation I'd like to see corrected by a report on the state of Canada, which I would like to see prepared not by a government agency but as a very factual thing that would give objective figures so we'd know about these things. I would like to see in it not only for the current or past year but 10- and 30-year comparisons so we could see something of where we've been and where we're going. It would in effect be a report card from our governments to the people of Canada.

MR. ADY: Well, I suppose we can make statistics say whatever we would like to say, but I would have a difficult time totally discounting Prof. Mansell's work in this area.

To leave that alone for a moment, I'd like to move on to another subject. You indicated that you were very anxious that Ottawa play a very major role in the administration of education across Canada. As you know, Ottawa has jurisdiction in our province over one area of education totally, that being on Indian reserves. Could I just ask you how well you think they have done in administering education on Indian reserves in this province?

MR. BENTLEY: I'm looking ahead, not back. I know as well as you do that education for our native peoples has not been well done, and there may be more than one cause for that, but we're trying to look ahead to build a Canada. Surely education is one of the most fundamental things to the future of the country and to the characteristics of the country, and we should at least have some basic provisions, standards. We've had the situation where students graduating from high school in one province couldn't go to universities in another because they weren't deemed comparable. We've had the recent controversy, including the Minister of Education for this province saying that we don't really know whether our dropout rate is higher than others because we haven't a basis for comparison. We can establish basic standards. We have had for a long time the federal contribution to postsecondary education. We can use

those mechanisms to leave much of the responsibility in the provinces but with national standards and some basic similarities.

MR. ADY: Well, you're off on a bit of a different issue, and no one can argue that we have to put a very high priority on education. However, back to my original question. I think we have to consider that the federal government presently has jurisdiction over that segment of education in this province and presently it's not all that successful, especially when native people themselves are vanning their students off reserves to schools in other jurisdictions operated by the provincial government. I think we have to look at the track record of someone and assess that when we consider giving them additional responsibilities in an area.

MR. BENTLEY: Well, if you're going to talk about track records, according to the media reports and even quoting some of the elected representatives in Alberta, our track record with respect to dropouts is bad, and we don't know how bad it is. The provinces have had responsibility.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Bentley. I just want to make a brief comment about the European Parliament. You referred to it. It reminds me of a biblical quotation: if you see a splinter in your neighbour's eye, be sure you remove the log in your own eye before you comment about the other side. Europe's rivers are sewers, and we know that.

MR. BENTLEY: So is the Saint Lawrence.

MR. POCOCK: Our next presenter is Gerry Beck.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Welcome, Mr. Beck.

MR. BECK: Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen of the committee, thank you for letting me speak today. In 1956 I came to Canada. I came to Alberta and to the city of Edmonton as a German immigrant. You will not see me today stating that I am a German Canadian. I am not a hyphenated Canadian; I am a Canadian, period. I am not an Albertan, not a western Canadian, but a Canadian.

I have studied the Bélanger-Campeau commission report, and I have studied the Allaire report of the province of Quebec. Based on those two reports I made my submission, and I commented on individual phrases of the reports. Ladies and gentlemen, I submitted several of these pages. They are very clear on individual items, and there is no sense elaborating any further on those items. However, I would like to submit additional information such as the addendum on page 11 that I have submitted. I hope you do have this. That's a recommendation I would like to make.

I'd like to make personal representation on items such as the question periods that are being permitted in the House of Commons and in the Legislatures. Ladies and gentlemen, when anybody watches question periods in the Legislatures or the House of Commons, that is really farce Canada. I've been so disappointed when I observe these so-called boards of directors. I consider Canada a great institution, and the representatives on these boards are supposed to behave like intelligent individuals. Don't belittle your opponent because he questions the government. When you do question the government, when you do have information you want out of it, you should also be able to make recommendations as to how to improve. You should not go to the government as legislators or as MPs in the opposition

simply to oppose. You must be able to make constructive criticism and constructive recommendations. I've found that this is not done in either the Legislatures or in Parliament, and I am very disappointed in that. I would appreciate if this committee made the recommendation that we behave more like intelligent individuals. The question period was on page 7 of my submission.

On page 8 I talked about fixed terms of office. By that I mean an MLA or MP should be elected on a fixed term for three or four or five years, similar to the municipalities. On that basis legislation, or Bills, can be defeated in the House of Commons or in the Assemblies but not the government. The government could only be defeated on a nonconfidence vote and can then, when an election is called, for another period of five years or whatever the term may be – but we should not give the Premiers or the MLAs or the Prime Minister an opportunity to say: "People support us today. We'll call a snap election whether we need it or not." That's one thing we should change.

9:49

On page 8 I also talked about a free, nonpartisan vote on all government Bills and amendments. By that I mean that when we talk about a Bill that can be amended, it should be. Don't belittle your opponent because he has recommendations to make or because he doesn't like what the government is doing. Again, I mentioned valid criticism can only be done when you have an alternative to present. This is what I have based my opinion on.

On page 8 I also talked about elimination of transfer payments. Ladies and gentlemen, I even go so far as to say that the province of Alberta ought to collect all its taxes including the federal government taxes and submit to Ottawa its share based on percentage representation. We have population representation in the House of Commons and in the Senate according to percentage of population. Let us share the cost on the same basis. Any revenue created in Alberta should stay in Alberta and we should pass on only our percentage to Ottawa that we are indebted to. Then we don't have to go back and beg for transfer payments such as medicare, UIC, or education funding. Let's forget it. We keep it and do our own.

On page 11 – that is the addendum I submitted; I hope you have it – I have stated that if a leader of a party, the Prime Minister or the Premier, has been defeated in his own constituency, he should not have the opportunity to ask somebody to step aside so he can call a by-election and run again in that constituency. Ladies and gentlemen, that is a farce. When anybody has been defeated in an election, the electors have spoken. A reasonable person should then step aside. That's done in British Parliament. It's done in every other Parliament in the world. In Alberta and in Canada I've noticed that some people think they are beyond what the electorate says, and they call a by-election, ask somebody else to step aside. That is a no-no. That's a farce. It's an insult to the intelligence of the electorate. I'd like to see amendments in our Constitution to prohibit that kind of manipulative election.

These are my very basic items that I've presented here. I've presented others. As I've mentioned on several other pages, Quebec might secede. Let us be prepared that Quebec could secede and might. If they do secede, let us be prepared to form our own governments based on region or a new Constitution, new Canada, without Quebec. We are today talking about a crisis in Canada. Gentlemen, it's not a crisis; it's evolution. It's a natural process of growing. I'd like to see Quebec remain in Canada. It's very interesting, very beautiful. When I go from English-speaking Canada to Quebec, it's different, distinct. Yes,

we do have distinct French-speaking multiculturalism in Quebec, but we also have distinct English-speaking multiculturalism in Canada. Let us remember that we do have these things.

In England they have the Channel Islands, Guernsey and Jersey. Guernsey is very British, beautiful British, yet next door is Jersey, beautiful French, distinct in itself, part of Britain. But they're small to govern, easy to govern. Why can't we accept a distinct French-speaking multicultural Quebec within Canada whereas the rest of Canada is a distinct English-speaking multicultural society? It's as simple as that.

In Switzerland you have three distinct societies. You have the German canton, you have the French canton, and you have the Italian canton. When you travel from one to the other in the German-Swiss part, you speak German; when you go to the French-Swiss, you speak French; when you go to the Italian-Swiss, you speak Italian. There is no trouble, no problem there. They recognize that those distinct societies in that area restriction are different. Yet they have their own languages. So there should be no problem if we recognize Quebec as a French-speaking society of Canada with the other multilingual associations in Quebec and the rest of Canada being English-speaking.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to give Mr. Elijah Harper my congratulations, because he has given us the opportunity to reject Meech Lake and to now make presentations to change Canada, make constitutional changes, and evolve into a new federation. I congratulate him for giving us this. Besides this, I'd like to say to Quebec: if you do decide, you cannot decide simply by saying adieu. We must settle our differences, and that means financial responsibilities and other responsibilities that have to be cleared up. If you do want to go, Quebec, I do say adieu after the settlement, after the divorce.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Beck. I just want to make a quick comment. You know, if your rule had been in place about not being able to seek a new seat in a by-election, three or four names come to mind that would have been lost to both the British Parliament - one was Sir Winston Churchill, who was defeated in his own constituency and sought re-election in another. Another was Mackenzie King, Prime Minister of Canada. Another very recently was Robert Bourassa, the Premier of Quebec. Another was Clyde Wells, the Premier of Newfoundland. There are many Canadians who like what Mr. Wells did. He would not have been at the constitutional table to represent the views of Newfoundland if the views you express had been in place.

MR. BECK: Mr. Chairman, yes, I am aware that other people have run, but I'm not saying this is right. It should be abolished. It should be changed. We obviously have other intelligent people who can make the same or similar representations on behalf of their provinces.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But you know something, if the people in the other constituencies don't want the individual, they will say so. I just point that out to you, and it's an interesting thing.

MR. BECK: I understand this, but what I'm trying to say is to let the electors, once they have spoken . . . Obviously they did not want a specific person, whether it's Winston Churchill or Adolph Hitler or whoever. I wish we could have gotten rid of Adolph Hitler in a vote. We didn't. Okay? What I'm trying to say is that when we bypass the requirements of an electorate and

then make an opportunity, that makes it a farce, to then say, "Oh, well, you know." That's my opinion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, that's a point of view. I just wanted to let you know that some very interesting people would have been lost to the political scene, including Mr. Wells.

MR. BECK: Well, they can still vote behind the scenes.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Beck, I want to say I certainly agree with your point that you shouldn't criticize government if you're not prepared to offer alternatives. The difficulty we have in question period is that it's not really structured to offer alternatives. You're allowed a sentence to set up a question, one question, one supplementary, and you're gone. I just wonder if you felt that maybe that time should be more relaxed or more human or somehow more interactive so you could have alternatives put forward as well as questions?

9:59

MR. BECK: Well, it's part of the changes, isn't it? If we are changing the Constitution, if we are changing government, if we are changing things, then we should change the question period if it is too restrictive. If it is not proper, then we should do it properly, like in a business. Now, when you sit on a board of directors and discuss the business, you don't always agree, but you do make recommendations. You don't always go, "Oh, well, this question I have asked and I cannot ask another question," a subsequent question, or whatever. You must be able to be reasonable on this. This is what I expect the government of Alberta to do within its own jurisdictions.

MR. McINNIS: I see. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Gagnon, and then Fred Bradley.

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you very much. I'm quite certain that you're aware that the situation in Quebec is changing constantly. In today's *Globe and Mail*, for instance, we have the leader of the Bloc Québécois saying that Bill 178, the outdoor signage Bill, was unfair and that he's ashamed of that and that maybe it should be rescinded. So I'm predicting, and I'll make a bet with you that they're not going anywhere. They want to stay as much as most of us want to stay together.

Leaving that aside for a minute, you mentioned that in Switzerland people who travel to the German canton speak German, when they go to the Italian canton, they speak Italian, and when they're in the French canton, they speak French. These are ordinary Swiss citizens who've learned three languages through their school system. Correct?

MR. BECK: Not necessarily so.

MRS. GAGNON: But when you go there, you speak the language that is there.

MR. BECK: Yeah.

MRS. GAGNON: To be able to do that, was it not the case that you had to have learned the language at school?

MR. BECK: Well, you learned those in the primary schools, and then you advance yourself on your personal basis. You get

the very basics in the primary schools – grade 1, grade 2, et cetera – and then you advance on your own individual basis.

MRS. GAGNON: I guess the point I'm making is that if Quebecois are to come to the rest of Canada, they have to know English, and if so-called English speaking people go to Quebec and they're only going to speak French there, then they have to have learned French. That's not my vision. My vision is that all of Canada allows for people to speak their own language because there are bilingual people there to receive them. I don't like the canton or the ghetto situation.

MR. BECK: Well, let's put it this way. When I was in Quebec and I spoke French – my French is very terrible – they said, "Well, we know." The Quebecois, the French people in Quebec, bent backwards to help me. They were so pleased that I tried. Now, when a French-speaking Quebecois comes to western Canada, he should try to speak English and try to assimilate in the English-speaking milieu similar to what an English-speaking western Canadian would do if he happens to decide to move to Quebec. You have to assimilate to live within that milieu that you associate with. That's common sense.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you very much.

Fred Bradley, and we have to then conclude. We have a large number of other presenters to come on.

MR. BRADLEY: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll try to be brief. There were two areas I wanted to touch on. One was the one Mrs. Gagnon mentioned. Bilingualism has been a point of contention across the country. You have mentioned your position regarding language. I just wanted to further ask you in terms of that: do you believe that if language policy became a responsibility of the provinces, that would create a stronger Canada?

MR. BECK: Well, I don't think it would make any difference so far as I'm concerned. What I'm saying is that you can't legislate that everybody ought to speak French or everybody ought to be speaking English. Leave it up to the individuals. You have certain rules and regulations, and if an individual wants to advance in the French language society, well, it's up to his responsibility to learn French. Isn't that common sense? You don't need to go and spend billions of dollars to transfer him and then educate him. That's his own personal responsibility. Why should we go and burden the citizens of Alberta with additional costs in the schools to educate people in French? That's their own personal responsibility. If I want to learn French, I go to a French school and I pay for it out of my own pocket, not the provincial government, not the resources of the taxpayers. That is my contention.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Beck. We appreciate your views, and you've given us a strong position. Thank you very much.

MR. POCOCK: I'd like to ask Marjorie Bowker to come forward and make a presentation to the committee.

MRS. BOWKER: Mr. Chairman and committee members, I would like just to highlight a few points from my written submission.

I'd like to say this: if the Alberta government really believes in a strong Canada, which it professes to do, the worst thing it

could do is promote decentralization. By this we mean, of course, that many powers now in the federal government would be transferred to the provinces. This will only have the effect of fragmenting the country. Instead of a united Canada we will have 10 little fiefdoms operating on their own and no central authority binding them together. Now, if there was ever a time when we need a strong central government, it is now. If we weaken the national government, we will destroy the very thing that binds us together.

As we all know, the Constitution of 1867 set up a division of legislative powers as between the provincial and federal governments, and there have been agreements over the years between the two levels of government for a sharing of additional powers in such fields as health care and higher education and social welfare. This has meant two things: national standards, which apply all across the country and, secondly, federal funding to help those provinces which could not finance such programs on their own.

If under decentralization these powers were transferred to the provinces, there would be no national standards, which has been one of our strongest unifying forces in the country. We would have a patchwork of programs, each province operating on its own, and we would end up with have and have-not provinces, many parts of Canada no longer able to afford the same standards of services. Now, Alberta would be contradicting itself if it talks on the one hand about a united Canada and then supports decentralization, which is the very thing that would destroy it.

The same reasoning applies in the economic field as well. The federal government has been able to overcome the vast economic disparities that exist throughout the country by such things as the regional development programs, which have the effect of equalizing economic opportunities, another very important unifying force. So I urge the members of this committee to consider the national unity implications before you favour decentralization.

This idea of greater powers to the provinces was very popular a few years ago and still is, of course, with big business and with some provincial governments and with the U.S., because Canada is much more vulnerable if it's weak at the centre. I'd like to point out that opinion polls show that the general public, and this is what you people represent, is moving away from the idea of decentralization in the interests of national unity. It would simply drive a stake in what keeps us together. So I say that Canada needs a strong central government to speak for all Canadians, to protect the rights of minorities, to ensure equality in health and social services, and overcome economic disparities.

10:09

Now, it's very interesting, you know, that we don't hear much about this point, but more powers mean more responsibilities to the provinces and a greater provincial tax burden. Somebody's got to pay for this. Even if we were to assume that Alberta could finance these programs on its own, there are many parts of Canada – the maritimes, the territories, even parts of the west – which simply could not. Now, the question is: do we care about the rest of Canada or only about ourselves? If we don't care, then perhaps we don't deserve a country.

Of course, Quebec is demanding a transfer to it of some 22 fields now occupied or shared by the federal government. If granted, we would end up with a federal government so weakened that the country would no longer be viable. I believe there are certain powers which must remain at the federal level if we are to survive as a nation, and that's why decentralization

is such a threat. However, the fact remains that Ottawa will very likely in the next few months and certainly in the next year agree to a transfer of powers to the provinces in order to satisfy Quebec, which, of course, remains the Mulroney government base for power. This present government in Ottawa must retain Quebec if it's to stay in power. That's going to happen, but what I'm suggesting is that the Alberta government has a responsibility to do something to counteract this. Simply this: to determine the maximum transfer of powers that should be permitted and nothing more. So my position is that I believe in a modest restructuring of federation, but not the degree that the Alberta government is advocating by statements made by its leading ministers.

Now, all this business of powers is even more important if the regrettable thing happens and Quebec chooses to leave Confederation. How are we going to hold the rest of the country together? Certainly not with continued conflict with a central government over powers. We should end this confrontation which has been going on between Alberta and Ottawa for the past decade and get down to the business of deciding what's best for Canada.

So, ladies and gentlemen, this committee in its recommendations must decide whether we really do care about a united Canada or only about ourselves. This power grab can only result in a weakening of national unity. So this is the choice that Alberta has: to be a leader in unity and strength through co-operation or be a follower to Canada's dismemberment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mrs. Bowker.

Fred Bradley.

MR. BRADLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mrs. Bowker, for your presentation. A theme that has been running throughout these hearings with some presenters has been that we should set these national standards and transfer some existing powers which the provinces have to the federal government. I guess what I would like to ask you: given that in a number of areas Alberta has some very high standards which exceed those of other provinces or exceed current national standards, would you be willing to transfer some of these present powers - education, for example, environment, health - to the federal government if that resulted in lower standards being practised in Alberta than the current high ones we have today? There are areas where the federal government does have sole jurisdiction in this province; for example, on Indian reserves in education and health. I can give you examples where the federal government has had environmental jurisdiction. Banff national park: the sewage treatment did not meet Alberta standards. Would you be prepared to transfer these powers to the federal government if it resulted in these lower standards then being in force in Alberta?

MRS. BOWKER: Well, I don't think that so far the federal government has had exclusive jurisdiction to the extent that their capabilities can be tested. Certainly you raise the Indian problem, and we can talk a lot about that, but I maintain that if there is a collaborative effort between the provinces and the federal government in many of these fields, we will have uniformity. Supposing health is all decentralized. I take sick in my native province of Prince Edward Island, and I find that their government isn't able to afford to hospitalize me. What do I do? Or supposing I need surgery. I'm going to shop around to the different provinces. Maybe Manitoba will do this surgery for me a little cheaper. We've got to have uniformity.

MR. BRADLEY: Well, what I'm suggesting is that uniformity may in fact result in lower quality of services for Albertans than the ones they now enjoy, because we'd then be lowered to a national standard rather than the high standard that we as Albertans have expected and would like to continue to enjoy.

MRS. BOWKER: Maybe that's the price we've got to pay to equalize the less prosperous parts of Canada.

MR. BRADLEY: You would be prepared, then, to see Albertans receive lower quality of services?

MRS. BOWKER: I would be prepared to do so if it was uniform across Canada. I think it's a price I'm prepared to pay.

MR. BRADLEY: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, Mrs. Gagnon. Mr. McInnis.

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you very much. I note in your brief that you favour bilingualism in the operation of the federal agencies throughout Canada, and that deals with the Official Languages Act, but you also say that language should be a provincial matter, a provincial jurisdiction. Are you then saying that you are not in favour of article 23 of the Charter, which deals with minority language rights? You know, people keep confusing the Official Languages Act and the Charter article 23. Could you clarify that, please?

MRS. BOWKER: Well there is a conflict, admittedly. There's a strong trend, apparently, across Canada that language be left to the provinces. The Charter of Rights would still prevail, and minorities certainly should be protected, as they are not in the province of Quebec right now. That would certainly have to be adjusted, and I appreciate the point you've made.

MRS. GAGNON: I guess I would try to clarify that. You're saying that the Anglophone minority in Quebec is not protected?

MRS. BOWKER: Well, certainly not by Bill 178.

MRS. GAGNON: I just read that they're thinking of rescinding that. I would hold that the situation with the minority in Quebec is far better than the Francophone minorities anywhere outside of Quebec.

MRS. BOWKER: Well, I know that in Alberta they have a reason to complain. I hope that will cease.

MR. McINNIS: Mrs. Bowker, I see you're wearing your Order of Canada pin today.

MRS. BOWKER: Thank you.

MR. McINNIS: I've noticed that people who are less powerful and less affluent tend to feel more comfortable with the federal government, I think, because they have freedom of information, they have a Privacy Commissioner, they have in the environmental field clear legislation in terms of environmental reviews and so forth, but I heard you say that you feel that the push for more provincial powers comes from big business, and I wondered if you might expand on that point.

MRS. BOWKER: I think we're going to see more of that. After all, big business is really American-dominated multinationals, and they would rather see a weak federal government to promote their business interests. I also heard, speaking of today, on my CBC radio coming over here the warning that let's be cautious about big business. This is something I will have to explore in my mind, but it was on the radio this morning, that just as they did with free trade, which was against the wishes of the Canadians: pour millions of dollars into promotion of this. Money did it; money did it at the last minute. The caution on this program this morning was to beware of this in the constitutional crisis.

MR. McINNIS: So your feeling is that multinational industries may want to negotiate environmental standards and taxation and labour issues with individual provinces rather than having to deal with the unified position for all 10?

MRS. BOWKER: You're right. You're right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mrs. Bowker.
Oh, yes. Jack Ady.

MR. ADY: Mrs. Bowker, I have a couple of questions as it relates to Quebec within Canada or perhaps without Canada. As you know, the Meech Lake accord contained five conditions that Quebec insisted on in order to come into the Canadian Constitution. The one issue that didn't seem to be palatable to the rest of Canada was the distinct society clause, and Meech Lake failed. Obviously, Quebec is not going to be prepared to stay in Canada unless they get something more than they presently have, and they're not going to come into the Constitution and probably will leave Canada unless some conditions are met. How far would you be prepared to go, or what conditions would you see Canada offering to Quebec to stay? What's the breaking point?

10:19

MRS. BOWKER: I think that's the crucial matter for decision: where is the breaking point? In a word, I think we should say to Quebec, "This is the kind of Canada we want; do you want to be part of it?" We have to make that decision instead of being reactive always to Quebec. I believe sincerely that Quebec has legitimate demands but not beyond a certain point, and we have to determine that.

MR. ADY: One last question: then should they have some concessions that other provinces don't have in the Constitution?

MRS. BOWKER: In respect to culture, language, law, and education, actually, the Constitution already provides this. I find it very hard to go beyond that, Mr. Ady.

MR. ADY: Well, okay, but then to take that one step further, you would isolate that within their provincial boundaries?

MRS. BOWKER: Well, yes.

MR. ADY: Then in that case, you would have to remove that national responsibility for education from the federal government, as it pertains to Quebec.

MRS. BOWKER: Well, of course, the recognition of minorities is already covered in the 1982 Constitution. To answer you

briefly, because we could talk considerably on this point, yes, I think Quebec deserves to have special considerations in those areas but not to the point of destroying the national identity. That's the crucial thing that we have to decide.

MR. ADY: So to just conclude this, you would be prepared to see Quebec receive some special concessions at the expense of centralization?

MRS. BOWKER: Yes. Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Fred Bradley, and then I have a brief comment to make.

MR. BRADLEY: Well, I just note one comment in your brief. You suggest that there should be a two-pronged approach in terms of where government should be going on this constitutional issue. One is to work on a deal with Quebec remaining part of Canada, and the other prong would be a restructured Canada without Quebec. Is that something you feel that this committee should present to Albertans: one view that's saying that this is what we propose in terms of a Canada with Quebec and this is what we would propose for a Canada without Quebec?

MRS. BOWKER: Yes, Mr. Bradley. I think this is a very much neglected area. Nobody is thinking about Canada without Quebec. Not to have a backup plan is a serious lack of statesmanship. Mr. Mulroney had no backup plan if Meech Lake failed, as it did. The result was that he had nothing to say from June till November, a vacuum. We must have a backup plan, and I do say the two-pronged approach.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, that's a very interesting point, because we are, as you know, going to come forward with a report to our Legislature, and we may have to have alternatives in it, obviously.

Just one point I'd like to make to you. You mentioned that we have through our regional development programs been able to smooth out the economic development situation within Canada. I would just tell you that I've spent a lot of time in the company of Clyde Wells, the Premier of Newfoundland, who claims that our regional development programs in Canada have been a total failure. He says that the reason for that is that when they have been developed, in every case, so that they can be used to assist the underdeveloped regions or the less prosperous regions of Canada, after they've been introduced, the other more prosperous provinces - Ontario and Quebec - start demanding the same programs apply to them. Eventually the federal government has given in to those demands, and the same programs then have been put across the country, leaving Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, particularly Cape Breton and so on, in exactly the same position they were in before. So it's a very interesting point.

You may wish to think about that a little bit and write Clyde Wells and get his views on that, because he's very, very strongly of that opinion that they really haven't worked the way they've been designed at the outset. It's an interesting concept. He is one of the strongest critics in Canada of those programs.

MRS. BOWKER: I realize the point you're making, and I'll give further thought to this.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's just something you may want to follow up on with him directly.

MRS. BOWKER: Mr. Chairman, if I might, I would like to refer to an earlier discussion that went on this morning, and that was with regard to immigration and the reference to the Cullen-Couture agreement of 1978 with the Trudeau government. I'd like to say that this has been reinforced by the Mulroney government by an immigration agreement that was signed between Ottawa and Quebec on December 27, 1990, giving Quebec far more powers over immigration than the Cullen report. I just want to clarify that point.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, there's no question about that, but its origins were in that 1978 agreement.

MRS. BOWKER: Yes, I know, but the point was made that the blame for it seemed to be attached to the former government.

I would like to commend, Mr. Chairman, this very fine document that your government released. I read it with great interest - Alberta in a New Canada - and I thought it was very objective. Whoever was responsible in your department for preparing it should be commended.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, it was the work of a lot of people and a lot of good advice that we got as we went through the process of consultation initially.

Thank you for your presentation this morning.

MR. POCOCK: Our next presenter is David Mason with the Alberta Association of the Deaf.

DR. MASON: Excuse me. I have an interpreter with me, and I'd like the interpreter to sit over there so that she can see everything and myself as well. This will be just fine.

Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Chairman, thank you for inviting me here today. I'd like to call attention to bilingualism and more specifically to the recognition of languages. I'd like to emphasize that bilingualism itself is a very important human manifestation. I'm sure you're all aware of people who realize having two languages reflects human capabilities and human ability to reason and understand and think about many things in many different ways. Language reflects thinking in those ways.

Deaf bilingualism means involvement of American sign language, known as ASL, and Quebec sign language, known as LSQ. LSQ refers to langue des signes québécois. We've got an English version of sign language and a French version of sign language here within Canada. Something that's been causing me a lot of concern is that people aren't giving a lot of attention or recognition or credit, if you will, to deaf people's abilities to use ASL and English, which is another language in itself. Recently there were changes that had occurred. A lot of people don't realize that on the CBC radio there's a lot of discussion on things concerning Canada, including deafness. There's one problem: deaf people don't have access to that information; it's on the radio. I think people don't even think twice on the fact of equal access when it concerns this particular issue.

10:29

Another area, speaking specifically about Alberta: deaf people have been able to go through school, and that's been wonderful progress, but deaf people have had hindrances because many people lack the understanding of the fact that deaf people have their own language. Many hearing people try to control language and the deaf community by ignorance in the sense that they're not aware of what's going on.

These are examples that I've shown you today of what it feels like for me and what some changes are that I feel need to occur within the Constitution Act. One wonderful thing that's really happened this last June, in 1990: the Alberta government passed a motion, a resolution that recognized American Sign Language as one of the languages of deaf people and also recognized it as a language of instruction in the school system. So right now we already have the two methods of communication and education in Alberta, and I think that's wonderful. We're starting to see the beginning of changes, and people are starting to increase their awareness of what's happening within the deaf community.

The reason I'm here today is that I would like to ask you if there's any possibility to redefine Canada's legislation Act that says right now that French and English are the two official languages. I think that really puts limitations on other very important valuable languages such as sign language. To me, I'd like to encourage more than just two official languages, as we have now: spoken English and spoken French. In my opinion, French and English are both wonderful. I think that's a positive thing in Canada. I don't think there should be any changes to that as it is in the hearing world. I think it's as important, though, as Ukrainian and German and other languages.

I think we could be a lot more versatile if we have the flexibility of allowing all languages rather than limiting ourselves to the two. To see only one language or two languages as official to me is excluding the other languages and the other needs for other languages. I would like to in some way see this two official languages Act be repealed if possible. I would like to see us finding some way to be able to amend some of the legislation that is occurring right now to encourage people to recognize that bilingualism includes not only English and French but should include spoken English and signed English, should include the vast minorities of the multilinguals that we have in this country such as Ukrainian and German, and not to recognize only the two languages as self-contained and official. Multiculturalism is wonderful, and people prefer to keep the essence of that. If we're speaking about the business community and the business community in that particular area speaks English, that's wonderful. If we find that people learn more about other languages such as American Sign Language, it gives them a lot more options. It gives deaf people a lot more options for access as well.

It seems historically that deaf people have been forced to only use spoken English. That's not a common theory in education that's accepted now about deafness. Right now, commonly in grades 4 or 5 deaf people have an education level that's lower because English isn't a natural language to learn in. I would like to emphasize that deaf people do have a language of their own; it's a viable, important language. Right here and right now what I am speaking in is American Sign Language. I'm reading from English, and I'm signing in American Sign Language. My interpreter is changing it back to English for me. I have the freedom right now to be able to use my language. I'm hoping that we can find some way to amend the Constitution in this Act.

There are some implications in Alberta and Calgary. There have been, for example, two deaf people who have been rejected from jury duty. The reasoning for that was that the jury system is set up to permit 12 people. The 13th person is not allowed there. For myself, I see that that needs to be changed to allow for that flexibility and equal access, to allow for the understanding that the 13th person would be there to be able to allow access. Jury duty is something that I feel I should be included in and a part of and not be denied, because I've got the 13th

person, the interpreter, there. They have actually rejected a deaf person as a citizen because I'm not allowed to be a jurist.

Basically, that's what I'm here for today, to discuss this issue. I feel that, for example, aboriginal people have their rights, and we support that. I think there are other people who have rights as well and who have access because it's a necessary part of their life. I think deaf people in the community have a really tough time, and there are a lot of barriers that are caused not necessarily by their deafness and not necessarily because deaf people aren't intelligent but because of ignorance of the general public. If it's introduced into legislation, it forces a standard and it forces people to accept it.

That's all I have to say for now. Thank you.
Sorry about that; I forgot my sign.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Dr. Mason. Any questions?

Mr. Rostad.

MR. ROSTAD: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Dr. Mason. You and I have had correspondence on the jury duty aspect. Just to clarify that, the Criminal Code, which is a federal statute, specifically addresses 12 being in there, and we have made representations to the federal government that that be changed, because I think the thrust is that we should recognize people for their abilities, not their disabilities. Any law where we have incorporated a contrary view to that I think we should definitely change. I thank you for your representations.

MR. CHAIRMAN: John.

MR. McINNIS: The Constitution of Canada, the Charter, recognizes languages in three ways: one is the right to speak in Parliament, another is the publication of statutes, and the third is communication with the government. What I'm not quite clear on is: what would be the best way to publish statutes and to facilitate communication with deaf people to the government? Any thoughts that you could offer would help.

DR. MASON: I realize that this is becoming a very expensive issue if you start to publish all the statutes in all languages throughout Canada; I do realize that. However, if you do want to publish those things in French, for example, why not then offer it in videotape or other means rather than only in print? My suggestion to you is not to try to publish everything in all languages; it's unrealistic. However, there should be some investment that allows people to have access to be able to change it to other languages. It doesn't necessarily have to have everything published but have the availability there. We've had 100 years of - let's use, for example, history books. You can't translate all history books into all languages; it's not possible. If people ask for funding to translate to their language, that funding should be there on an as-needed basis when it's requested. I don't see a problem with that. To translate everything into all languages to begin with is a waste, yes.

10:39

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Dr. Mason, and I thank you for your kind remarks about the resolution in our Legislature sponsored by Mr. Payne last year. I know that received all-party support for the recommendation.

DR. MASON: That's correct. That's wonderful. I'm excited about that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Of course now, for those of you who watch question period as it is broadcast and rebroadcast on cable vision throughout the province, American Sign Language is provided for that aspect of our governmental operations, and I think it's a good start. I hope you agree with that small step.

DR. MASON: You're correct though. I agree with that. Alberta, I must say, has made great strides. The only thing that bothers me, I think, is Canada's legislature Act that limits the two languages.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much for your presentation.

DR. MASON: Thank you very much for this opportunity.

MR. POCOCK: The next presenter to the committee is Una MacLean Evans.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would you mind, Mrs. Evans, if we just took a very brief break? We're running a little bit behind time, but I think it would help us all to stretch our legs.

MRS. EVANS: Not at all. A stretch is probably a good idea.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

[The committee adjourned from 10:42 a.m. to 10:54 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'd like to reconvene, and I'd call now on Una MacLean Evans to give us her views.

MRS. EVANS: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. I'm very pleased to have the opportunity of making a submission on this most vital question. I welcome the opportunity of addressing a necessarily few remarks and wish you well in your deliberations.

The Bélanger-Campeau commission report in Quebec spoke of the serene nature of their hearings. I wish the same serenity for your hearings, but I must comment that perhaps that atmosphere was brought about by the fact that only half the members of that commission were elected members; the other half were electors, a commission makeup which might well have been emulated when this committee was set up.

Not long ago, Mr. Chairman, the CBC aired a program designed to show the knowledge, or lack of it, by Canadians of this nation's history. The result: abject failure. Even worse: statements by people such as the Chair of the Edmonton public school board that the teaching of history was not too important, or words to that effect. I submit it is vitally important, and people drawing up curricula could give much more stress to this area. It's important for us as Albertans, for instance, to know that Canada's first permanent settlements were made 300 years before Alberta became a province and that when those settlers, the French, arrived, they found living here the migratory peoples of several distinct tribes of aboriginals. It's important now, Mr. Chairman, to look at history, true history, not the revisionist history currently being given wide circulation in Canada in respect of the Constitution and its evolution. Usually revisionist history is written only after the event, when participants can no longer respond; in Canada we seem to be doing it as we go along.

Our age-old or historic battle over provincial rights has reached a new threshold: no longer provincial rights, but sovereign rights. However the rhetoric has changed, the

demands are much the same. I would point out that in 1976, for instance, then Premier Lougheed of this province, speaking for all Premiers in response to Prime Minister Trudeau's invitation for a renewed dialogue on the Constitution, answered that all provinces agreed with the objective of patriation. They also agreed that patriation should not be undertaken without a consensus being developed on an expansion of the role of the provinces and/or jurisdiction in the following areas: culture, communications, Supreme Court of Canada, spending power, Senate representation, and regional disparities.

I don't recall any great outcry at the time, and I ask myself now: why could Premier Lougheed advocate without criticism what now Quebec is being widely criticized for advocating? Many of those things are now again on the table, as indeed they were in Meech Lake. We must be fair in our judgment when deliberating this question on a national basis, and we must be accurate.

I wish everyone concerned could read these two reports, for there is much in the analysis which could be written by any government, any provincial government or opposition in Canada today, particularly with respect to the economy and the doubling up of services. Ten minutes doesn't give time to do any kind of analysis, but I enjoin members of your committee, Mr. Chairman, to do so. In particular, I hope you will compare the two reports, one with the other, because there are important differences and there are important openings, it seems to me. Only a thorough analysis will enable us to make meaningful proposals in response to the substantive requests of these reports. It seems to me that the Bélanger-Campeau report is more open to response than is the Allaire report. However, even though the Allaire report is sometimes contradictory, it does spell out in greater detail the specifics with which we have to deal, and it is therefore, perhaps, much more worrying.

Allaire speaks of repatriating powers. He even talks about repatriating some powers which never have been assigned, particularly residual powers. Might I suggest, Mr. Chairman, that your research staff undertake to adumbrate these powers which have been relinquished over the years and do a comprehensive analysis of what repatriating those powers to provinces would mean. One can guess, then, that in both economic and social terms, and both are important, the cost would be high, but it's important to know. Quebec is doing its homework, and Alberta must do so, as well, and expeditiously. I can't stress too greatly that provinces, in making their analyses and submissions, do not sacrifice the integrity of Canada on the altar of monetary advantage to themselves. We have not reached the impressive record in world councils which we now enjoy by taking a purely selfish, insular approach.

The Allaire report and to a lesser degree the Bélanger-Campeau report cite the failure of Meech Lake as a rejection by Canada outside of Quebec itself. Bélanger-Campeau also say the matter of language used in signs largely coloured discussions concerning linguistic relations in the eyes of Canadians outside Quebec. It is apparent that Bill 178 was perceived outside Quebec in much the same way the failure of Meech was perceived inside, and in terms of fallout I am personally convinced that that Bill had much to do with the results of the Beaver River by-election in this province.

Regardless of these perceptions or misperceptions, we must move on. In doing so, we should make sure, while speaking two languages, of taking the same meaning from what each is saying. Does sovereignty, for instance, mean the same thing to the two parties? Bélanger-Campeau refers to Quebec as a "distinct

national collectivity." Such a phrase would probably have saved Meech Lake. Precision of language and of meaning is vital.

Mr. Chairman, time doesn't permit further discussion at the moment of some other aspects of these two reports. I'm sure that constitutional experts during the next week will deal with them at length and throughout the course of your hearings here and in Calgary. I hope the government will see fit or your committee will see fit in the very near future to advise Albertans as to the manner in which Alberta proposes to have its submissions taken into account by the federal and other provincial governments. The doors behind which you used to meet are now closed in the present circumstance. This must not be a fruitless exercise without the possibility of achieving results.

Finally, members of the committee, while it is vital to address the concerns raised in the two Quebec reports, it is equally vital to address the question of belonging: wishing to belong, and of letting Quebec know we wish them to continue to belong to our wonderful country. It is of supreme importance that we give support in any way possible to those in Quebec who favour remaining in Canada and that we expend herculean efforts to convince those who do not or who are wavering in our devotion.

Does that mean something, that little bell?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That means the 10 minutes has elapsed.

MRS. EVANS: Oh, does it? I will just conclude, then, by giving one or two instances where I think individual Canadians can help in this situation. Parents in French immersion schools should be encouraged to maintain and step up their cultural exchange programs. The province could well support such projects financially. Alberta could take ads in Quebec telling them in French that we care. Chambers of commerce, business groups, labour organizations, service clubs could twin with their counterparts in Quebec. Tourist advertising could suggest holidaying in Quebec. Conventions could be planned. We could reinstitute the people-to-people campaign of 1980, send telegrams of support to their successful people who compete globally for Canada. Kurt Browning skates for Canada, and we say thanks to him. How many of us said thanks to Josée Chouinard, who also skates for Canada?

11:04

I don't think we can let ourselves be outflanked, Mr. Chairman, by secessionists, by sitting by and saying it's inevitable. We can't let the naysayers go unchallenged. We must tell Quebec we want them. We must spell out our own desires but not in a selfish, self-centred way.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

Mrs. Gagnon, and then Fred Bradley.

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you, Una. I know that you're very interested in immigration, so I would like to ask you if you'd like to make a few comments about immigration. Who should have the power over that aspect of our Constitution? Then I would like to ask a supplementary afterwards.

MRS. EVANS: Thank you. Well, there are, as you know, the agreements with Quebec, and it seems to me that in this area as in many other areas you can't take a step backward. I personally think that too much emphasis is placed on the powers of a province over immigration. As you know, I served the Court of Canadian Citizenship during eight years, and in the course of

those eight years in northern Alberta I personally administered the oath of citizenship to 45,000 people. This is about 5,000 people a year in northern Alberta coming to Canada.

Just as an aside from your question: it's worth taking into account their reasons for coming, and I would give you an example at the end if you would.

On the matter of immigration, my assessment of where people had lived before they came to Alberta was that about 25 percent in any given year had lived in another province before they came to Alberta. So the question of mobility across Canada is important. People, immigrants as well as people who were born here, will go where the opportunities arise. We know that people are coming, for instance, from Saskatchewan into Alberta, from other parts. We saw this prior to 1980.

That question raises other implications that must be dealt with. Unemployment insurance: Quebec talks about that. How can a province institute such a national program? There are pension questions, the portability of pensions. All these are tied in with the whole question of immigration, but I personally don't see it as so much a threat as other people do.

I just wanted to give you the example, if you can talk about it in emotional terms, and I don't think we can just talk in economic terms on this question. I think we have to be a little emotional about Canada. I remember a gentleman in Plamondon, Alberta, 95 years of age. He was a member of what they call the old believers' society. He had been born in Russia, been forced out of Russia to Manchuria, forced out of Manchuria to Brazil, from Brazil to the United States, and finally to Plamondon, Alberta. I asked him why, and he said: "It is because Canada gives me sanctuary. My people are free here. I am free to live my life, to expand my family, to educate my family, to practise my religion, and it is a place of sanctuary."

One of my colleagues on that court was the Deputy Premier of the province of Quebec, Lise Bacon, and my recollection of her feelings was that she shared the same feeling about Canada as do I.

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you. A quick supplementary. Maybe it's a comment more than a question. Thank God this whole constitutional process is dynamic and it's changing day by day right before our eyes. You mentioned Bill 178 in Quebec and the terrible hurt that caused many people across the country, and I read today in the *Globe and Mail* that even Lucien Bouchard, the leader of the Bloc Québécois, is now saying that Bill 178 is unfair. So there's hope there.

MRS. EVANS: Indeed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
Fred.

MR. BRADLEY: Thank you very much for your presentation. You suggest that there's some reasonableness in Bélanger-Campeau and the Allaire report, and you made some historical references to earlier discussions regarding the repatriation of the Constitution and enumeration of powers which provinces wish to discuss. In terms of Canadians' view of Bélanger-Campeau and Allaire, I think there's a view that it goes too far in terms of the transfer of powers. Are there powers which are enumerated in both those reports which you feel should not be up for discussion?

MRS. EVANS: Well, no. I think everything's on the table really. We're talking about some fundamental changes, institu-

tions. There are things outside those reports that I think also have to be discussed. Some are our national institutions. Neither of them deals particularly with the Senate, other institutions, the Crown corporations: the CBC, the National Film Board. The Bélanger-Campeau report is a little more evenhanded in that I think it leaves the door open a little bit more for discussion than does the Allaire report. The Allaire report is very heavy on sovereignty association and how things could work. You will know, having read that report particularly, that there are very, very great difficulties posed. There are some areas where our interpretation in the rest of Canada is perhaps different than theirs, but I think we have to recognize their differences – their perceived difficulties, slights from the rest of Canada – as we must ask them to recognize our concerns as westerners or as Canadians that we're not fairly dealt with in terms of regional development or other matters.

MR. BRADLEY: A supplementary. I think you suggested that the door has been closed in terms of negotiations, in terms of their traditional sense. Who do you feel has a responsibility to negotiate with Quebec in this process? The federal government alone, or is there a role for the provinces regarding these future discussions? Secondly, what sort of process or how do we approach these discussions and negotiations with that province since they've closed the door in the traditional sense?

MRS. EVANS: Well, when I talked about the closed door, I really meant that negotiations in large part have been conducted in secret, behind closed doors. I didn't mean that the door was closed on the process. It seems to me that the process has opened up to Canadians in a way that it never has been in the history of Canada, not even at the time of Confederation. The fact that I'm here and that other people are here making submissions today is certainly evidence of that.

I think the question cannot be resolved between Quebec and Canada alone, because as you know, many of the things which we will probably ask for as the province of Alberta or Saskatchewan or Manitoba, whatever province, are going to be the same. You can't talk about any of these questions – the sharing of tax powers, for instance – without taking into consideration how that will affect the rest of Canada. Even Quebec can't do that, because how the tax sharing is determined is important to them vis-à-vis what happens in any other province.

MR. BRADLEY: Do you have any thoughts or ideas on how we get the province of Quebec to a table where we can mutually discuss these issues?

11:14

MRS. EVANS: Well, I think you'd say it's very important that whatever doors are open with Quebec be gone through. As provinces, I think you have to make what overtures you can, but not in the belligerent sense, I'm sorry to say, in which your Premier conducted his last visit. Quebec asks for frankness. Frankness is one thing; belligerence is another.

The results of a commission. I don't know how you intend as a committee to present these kinds of things, and that is certainly one of the questions that has to be addressed. The process last time was wrong, because the people of Canada were shut out. There must be a way found to hear people. But Quebec itself has heard a multiplicity of groups and individuals, and I don't think they would shut the door on direct approaches from other provinces. Somehow this has to come together. If

you're asking me what I think about a constituent assembly, I think the time is passed for that type of approach.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
Ken Rostad.

MR. ROSTAD: Yes. Una, do you think that official bilingualism has been successful, and do you think that should be on the table for discussion?

MRS. EVANS: Well, if there's a question of removing bilingualism, yes, I think it should be on the table. I feel very strongly in favour of bilingualism. I know that my children have been educated in the French language, and I know that is a very great benefit to them.

I think on the question of language, and perhaps Madame Gagnon would agree with me on this, if we could look at the learning of another language, be it English or French, as a learning opportunity of expanding our own knowledge, and taking it out of the political context – we haven't talked about language in terms of what it means to us in self-development. We talk about it in terms of a political question, and I think that has poisoned the attitude towards the whole question. But I strongly favour bilingualism.

MR. ROSTAD: So you would concur that language should then be a federal responsibility as against a provincial responsibility?

MRS. EVANS: I think there are certain things that have to be enshrined as rights. Human rights and language rights are two. The provision in terms of the infrastructure regarding language certainly has to remain within provinces, much the same as education, I suggest. On the subject of education I think we shouldn't be led astray by some of the incursions of the federal Prime Minister into that area. It seems to me that this is one of his ways of drawing attention away from the subject which we are discussing in a broad sense and focusing it on an area where he knows he can't deliver. So I think that's true in an overall sense. We tend to be drawn off into areas like that – bilingualism, immigration, education, whatever – and lose sight of the main purpose. The main purpose is the continued integration of Canada.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Mrs. Evans, that's a very interesting comment about the Prime Minister's incursion into education, and you might find some agreement on that. In any event, I think your comment about history is very useful. We don't know our history, and that's very, very sad . . .

MRS. EVANS: It's appalling.

MR. CHAIRMAN: . . . and revision of the history to suit the needs of current political aims is something that is very, very unfortunate. But I do thank you very much for your thoughtful comments today. If you have anything in writing you would like to leave with us, please do that either now or later, because we do want to analyze the thoughts of people that are brought to the table.

MRS. EVANS: Thank you very much. I'll take advantage of that opportunity when I have translated my writing into something more readable.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you very much.

MR. POCOCK: Our next presenter this morning is John Sworder.

MR. SWORDER: This is a personal brief. First, I must say I want Quebec to stay in Canada and for Canada to grow as one country with strong, prosperous regions in a spirit of adventure and well-being in the whole of Canada.

Two, it would be better if many of us could talk to each other. I would like to see it mandatory for all university entrants in Canada to be functionally proficient in both English and French, both spoken and written. I am not suggesting high academic proficiency but only functional proficiency so we could talk and correspond with each other. This is no handicap. I was required to have a second language to enter the University of Saskatchewan in the '40s. It was written French; we had no verbal French. It is a shame that verbal French was not also required.

Three, if Quebec chooses to leave, it means complete financial separation. I have never heard of a divorced couple who maintained a joint bank account or guaranteed each other's credit cards. Quebec must be made aware of our feelings. Separation means different currencies, division of financial institutions for taxing and reporting, complete separation of taxation in all areas, no equalization payments, no industrial preference or aid, discretion over the movement of labour from Quebec with full personal income taxes paid in the area of employment. This means no write-off for families living in Quebec, no inclusion of Quebec in quota systems for agricultural products or other commodities. All Canadian taxes would apply in addition to taxes charged in Quebec for Canadian companies. No compensating benefits would apply. They are either in or they are out. Quebec must be made aware that there are financial advantages to being in Canada.

My fourth point: strong regional financial institutions are required in Canada. Banks, trust companies, insurance companies dependent on, responsive to, and run for the regions of the country in which they are located, are required. The animosity to the centrally controlled banks in Toronto should not continue to be an irritant and divisive factor in Canada. This recommendation comes from personal experience. In 1967 when I was in Quebec for Expo, I talked until about 4 in the morning with a French Canadian about Canada and our hopes for Canada. He was a university graduate with two degrees and had been a trust officer in one of the national – i.e., Toronto – banks. Their job was to collect money in French from Quebecers, but when it was time to borrow money of any consequence, it was necessary to present your case in English in Toronto. It was humiliating for him with his marginal English to have to overcome a language barrier and the apparent total lack of regional economic knowledge of people in Toronto. If he had to kiss the feet – his term – of the Anglophones to discuss, to do business, he did not want the English or Canada. I have no doubt he became a separatist. We got along very well and found many things on which we agreed. Our hopes for a good life and opportunity were similar. Many of the west's problems are similar to Quebec's.

Quebec has recognized a perceived economic prejudice, and since the mid-60s established regional financial institutions in a very deliberate way. There are many such institutions. The Quebec civil service pension plan is the largest pool of investment capital in Canada today. It dwarfs Alberta's meagre heritage trust fund. The Quebec credit unions are large, widely based deposit institutions. The national Laurentide banks have established in Quebec. Tax benefits are given to Quebecers

who buy shares in Quebec companies. Quebec is moving quickly to be a financially independent region in or out of Canada.

11:24

Other regions must recognize the need to remove the irritant and hatred generated by centrally controlled financial institutions. The central banks have a distressing historical pattern of moving large amounts of available credit into regions of Canada which have expanding boom-time economies. This large movement of money feeds the expansion in the region and overheats the economy. When the boom fades, as it inevitably must, the central banks quickly withdraw their money. Several examples will be used.

They have done it again. In the late '80s the Toronto economy was booming, and credit was freely available for the overinflated real estate market. I'm sure most of us realize that the boom in real estate in Toronto is failing. Individuals and companies are hurting. I'm sure we all feel sorry for the people in Toronto.

In the '70s Alberta was where the action was. Credit was readily available for business expansion and for the real estate market. In the early '80s our economy was hit hard by the change in prospects for oil. When we needed help, the Toronto based banks withdrew their support. Operating drilling rigs went from over 800 to under 200. About a third of the construction companies were into bankruptcy in 1983. House prices collapsed with the change of the banks' lending criteria for home ownership. Talk of separatism in the west was very real at that time. A national broadcaster publicly advised Trudeau and Lalonde not to walk the streets of Calgary. He felt their lives were in danger. Alberta is to be commended for having a law on the books at that time which limited the liability of a home mortgage to the value of the house. This saved many Albertans from bankruptcy.

In the '20s banks loaned heavily to the prairie wheat farmers. Wheat was king, and everybody wanted in on the profits. In the '30s Saskatchewan enforced a law which prohibited the closure of the home quarter. Farmers who were otherwise destitute kept their homes and the bare living available from their home quarter. The family farms were saved.

I have to wonder if the Bank of B.C. would have folded if the province of B.C. had put the cash flow from their own civil servants through that bank. Provincial and regional governments have a role in promoting regional financial institutions. Whether we are fair and justified in the hatred and distrust of centrally controlled financial institutions is immaterial to this discussion; the perception is real. We cannot allow the anger and distrust of financial institutions to be a factor in the division of Canada.

Quebec has gone its own way in establishing its own Quebec financial institutions. Let us hope this removes the irritant to this condition so that their continued participation in Canada is not in doubt. Perception is more powerful than reality in the emotional question of political allegiance. Money tears families apart; it can also tear countries apart. Please, let us develop regionally committed and responsible financial institutions.

Our immigration policies and ethnic sponsorship are a major source of discontent and political friction between Ottawa, Quebec, and the population of Canada. Canada has welcomed peoples from many countries in the past, but I do not like the rumblings of discontent I feel today. Does Quebec accept our present immigration policies? They do not. Quebec is aware that the French language can be submerged by the English in North America. They have asked for total control over immigra-

tion into Quebec. They require all new immigrants to be educated in French.

Is multiculturalism acceptable to Quebec? Are they willing to have tax dollars spent so non-Francophones can practise their separate cultures? I do not know, but it is contrary to their statements and the laws I've seen. For many the department of multiculturalism appears to be a political slush fund for politicians to buy blocks of ethnic votes. Maybe that's hard. Why politicians would establish such a fund and risk the inevitable condemnation of ethnic favouritism – or worse, being subject to pressure groups – I do not understand.

We need to spend more money to introduce immigrants to Canada. Is the financial assistance to maintain and encourage ethnic diversity in Canada a good use of our limited tax dollars? Money is desperately needed to prepare immigrants to take a full, productive, contributing part in the cultural life and economic prosperity of Canada. We should welcome immigrants in a positive way when they enter Canada – and I repeat "when they enter Canada" – by using tax dollars to provide the following: living assistance for a limited length of time, English and French courses for adults, history classes on Canada, a thorough grounding in the operation of the police system in Canada and the need to keep the peace, an explanation of their legal rights and responsibilities, and above all precounseling and language training for children so they may enter and participate in our local schools and become new Canadians. The above will cost money.

Ottawa exercises the authority to decide the number and ethnic origin of immigrants. With authority must come proportionate financial responsibility. Ottawa should totally finance and be responsible for the cost of introducing immigrants into Canada's society as outlined above. At present much of the educational costs falls on the province and particularly local school boards. It is unfair for urban schools with large immigration policies to be asked to shoulder the cost and suffer the difficulties created by immigration policies from Ottawa.

Quebec rejects Ottawa's immigration policies. Other provinces may do as well. I hope immigration policies are not a wedge driving Canada apart.

It is a great country we live in. I have seen it from coast to coast and lived in five provinces. If it is to remain together, blunt, hard, considerate talk is required free of parochial interests. I hope we stay together and prosper as one united country.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much for your thoughtful comments. I note that you have written material. If you wish to have it duplicated, we'll make it available to our colleagues on the other side of the panel, who are now in Calgary. You can leave it with our secretary or a member of the staff.

Questions or comments?

If I could just make one comment on the subject of perception. That is an extremely important matter. The saying, of course, is that perception is reality. Let me just tell you a little story about a young diplomat and his first posting to Peru. On the Peruvian national day he attended several cocktail parties to celebrate that occasion and finally ended up at the presidential palace. In a very large crowd at the gathering he perceived a vision in scarlet on the other side of the room. When the music struck up, he walked across the room and asked for a dance. The reply was: "No, for three reasons: first, you're drunk; secondly, I'm the archbishop of Lima; and thirdly, the music is the Peruvian national anthem." So perception is not always reality, but you make a very good point nonetheless.

MR. SWORDER: I neither drink, like boys, nor dance to national anthems.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I know. The point is, however, that how you overcome perceptions is a very, very key thing for us as Canadians. Mrs. Evans made an exceptionally good point about our history earlier on. I think we have to really start thinking and looking.

One of the reasons we put out our document, Alberta in a New Canada, is that we tried to overcome some of the perceptions there in a nonpartisan way – I appreciated some of the compliments we've had about that paper – so we could get a discussion going without . . .

MR. SWORDER: Understanding perceptions is very needed. We stopped for probably eight hours with that French Canadian. That is the type of talk and the time we're going to need to get perceptions understood. It's hard talk, and often anger occurs, but that has to be accepted.

11:34

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, Mrs. Gagnon?

MRS. GAGNON: Yes. If I might talk about perceptions as well, I think there's a perception that, for instance, Francophones in Alberta and Francophones in Quebec are not multicultural. In actual fact, the Francophone community in Alberta is multicultural; the people, although they share a language, are of many races, many cultures, many religions. The same thing exists in Quebec. So that's a perception I think we have to get rid of. Multiculturalism exists within the two linguistic dualities that we have.

MR. SWORDER: If you wish to say that the people of England are multicultural, with Welsh, Cornish, and what have you, that's not the type of multiculturalism I'm referring to. I'm talking about the sponsored multiculturalism.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much for your presentation.

MR. POCOCK: Our next presenters, representing the Canadian Multicultural Educational Foundation, are Mr. Bai and Mr. Koilpillai.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Welcome, gentlemen. Thank you very much for joining us.

MR. BAI: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and good morning, panel members. We'd like to thank you for this opportunity. I will introduce myself. My name is David Bai; I'm acting as chairperson of MCF, which is the Multicultural Communications Foundation. To my right, Robinson Koilpillai, who is acting as chairman of the Canadian Multicultural Educational Foundation. These are two sister organizations. MCF publishes *Canadian Link*, and CMEF does mostly educational activities.

MR. KOILPILLAI: Mr. Chairman and members of the panel, I too want to express my appreciation for the opportunity. As David has already said, the sister organizations have a mandate which includes a mission to foster and develop educational activities aimed at positive appreciation and participation of citizens and communities, for opportunity in and benefit of Canada.

Now, we are here this morning, and we have prepared a fairly comprehensive proposal. I think copies are being distributed to you. We will try and be brief, to highlight some of the points we feel strongly about. We believe in citizens' participation in building and nurturing a national community, and we do appreciate this task force of the provincial government in providing that opportunity.

I will ask David to present you with an overview of our proposal, and then perhaps very quickly we'll hit on some of the highlights of our recommendations.

MR. BAI: As part of our overview, we believe that this is the Canada round. The goal is the building of a viable national community to which all Canadians can subscribe. This requires a restructuring in a significant sense of our economic and political institutions from which Canadian society is built. We also believe the framework within which this should be done will be based on our political tradition of representative democracy and responsible government and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This requires greater citizen participation and community participation.

Canada's national communities consist of three identifiable components: one, English-speaking multicultural community; two, French-speaking multicultural community; third is native aboriginal multilingual and multicultural community. This can be done through several reform measures. Brief highlights are of four main areas of potential reform. Economic is one of the areas, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the constitutional reform, which has two parts in it.

MR. KOILPILLAI: Now, coming to our recommendations, which appear on page 9, we have presented an executive summary of this, which is presented in five parts. We caught in the preamble there, from the preamble of Bill C-93, which was the Bill that introduced the Multiculturalism Act in the government of Canada:

The Government of Canada recognizes the diversity of Canadians as regards race, national or ethnic origin, colour and religion as a fundamental characteristic of [Canada].

MCF and CMEF make the following recommendations to the Alberta select special committee. Numbers one and two of the recommendations will be dealt with by David very briefly, and I will be making a comment on the subject of education.

MR. BAI: First of all, let me just state as part of my remarks that we believe that economic reform is integrated and complex, interdependent in fashion, connected with cultural and social reform including politics. It is not separate. That's the only way, we believe, that we could, let's say, restore the comparative position both of productivity and also that raising the standard of living for Canadian citizens can be achieved.

In our discussion of the Charter we are not requesting any restructuring of the Charter. What we are asking is simply institutional reform within the Charter, which is such an important Canadian value that we instituted in the 1982 Constitution. What is missing, from our point of view, or what needs to be done is institutional reform dealing with community relations, especially dealing with the minority communities and the majority communities. We do have a clear Charter spelling out the relationship between individual and state, but as a multicultural nation, as we are accepting regional, cultural, other diversity, we do not have a whole. Those different communities function and work out their differences, as with their problems, sorting it out. So we need some form of intermediating institu-

tional reform. It's these kinds of disputes that caused the courts – courts are not in the solution to these kinds of problems. This is not a fundamental power game; this is more community issues. So that's what we are requesting.

11:44

Among other things that we would like to see from the existing Charter is some notion that education is of fundamental importance to all Canadians. Secondly, environment has increasingly become not only a national but an international issue; therefore, I would like to see that stated in some way. As the division of labour becomes more globalized, increasingly the second part of that problem of the environment issue also becomes more globalized. So that's what we are asking there. The third part is our economy; this is obvious to you.

The third one we are requesting is elimination of this notwithstanding clause, section 33. The reasons: as you will see, we have a comprehensive package of reform in the Senate, and the amending formula will require this to be redundant.

Division of powers. We are not asking the wholesale reform of the Constitution, but we are following similar to Prof. Peter Meekison's suggestion that he made to the Business Council on National Issues of simply creating more legislative design, to agree to create a concurrent jurisdiction which would maintain both federal and provincial paramountcies and in such a way create a greater facilitator of co-operation among the governments. He outlined the four areas of constitutional reform since 1940. So he believes that we need to move away from the more territorial jurisdictional discussion from which we're going to a more functional or what I call market-oriented concept of looking at the broader co-operation, which I believe is essential to creating Canada to be not only a more cohesive society but also a better competitive society. The national government and the provinces are not in a sense equal to be able to do the kind of task that we need be. So we need more pooling in a regional sense to be better competitive.

MR. KOILPILLAI: Mr. Chairman and members of the panel, I'd like to direct your attention to page 19, which we consider very important in terms of education. Canada's educational system needs fundamental restructuring. Ours is the only major industrialist country which does not have a national educational system and national standards to meet the needs of the coming decade. The U.S. is the second exception, until recently: Bush has announced a new national education policy. More recently Prime Minister Mulroney also had made some statement on this.

One of the earlier presenters talked about Canadian history: present, past, and evolving. We would suggest very strongly that education become a concurrent jurisdiction, shared jurisdiction, at all levels so that it is portable for people who are moving across the country, and it would help build not only a Canadian identity but international competitiveness.

I'd like very quickly to move briefly into Senate reform, which is on page 34. We, as we have presented here, support the triple E concept but on a regional basis. We have indicated there five regions: Atlantic, Quebec, Ontario, the west, and the northwest. We're also recommending, to ensure effective regional participation and decision-making, a double majority principle: a majority vote of the Senate as a whole and a majority vote of Senators from each region in order to be effective. Finally, the Senate should be responsible for reviewing all federal appointments, for monitoring and evaluating the whole of the Charter in Canadian society, and for recommending improvements to

institutions to meet the full intentions and potential of the Charter.

MR. BAI: Finally, we believe if these measures are accepted, then as I see it, the notwithstanding clause is to some extent redundant. It could be left there, but of course as a preference we would like that to be eliminated, because the reformed Senate would have that built-in notion that without support of a Quebec majority it cannot pass.

Now, what we are doing instead of going to veto power, we are trying to go on a more proactive sense of a Canadian co-operation. I think the way we've been operating these provincial/territorial vetoes is a more 19th century concept. We need to be a more proactive government with greater citizens' participation if we're going to be productive and competitive, also building functioning national communities, which we expect that we'd like to see as the Canada round.

The last thing we'd like to see is that there is – what has happened the last few years is what we call executive federalism. In essence, we believe the Constitution is similar to what Willard Estey has stated in one of his appearances at the Beaudoin-Edwards committee, that Constitution-building is for the people, not just legislators; fundamentally it belongs to the people also. So we'd like to see greater participation of Canadian people, which will be a greater way of creating enthusiasm among Canadians. That has to be renewed, and also legitimacy has to be renewed. Those cannot be done without greater participation of Canadians. I don't think it's solely the job of politicians. I'm not trying to downgrade the role of politicians; it's a tremendously important job. But it's time that the Canadian citizens and their community have a greater say about what kind of Canada and the expanded notion of citizenship they could play in the building of a national community. The Constitution must reflect that vision, that idea, those values, and that commitment.

Thank you.

MR. KOILPILLAI: One last, finally – finally – if you will bear with us. We are strongly suggesting that we add a Canada clause. We would like that the Alberta presentation would include a Canada clause, which appears on pages 10 and 11. This Canada clause would recognize Canada as a whole and a distinct society, a distinct nation, and within that there will be others distinct, within the bilingual context which is at once historically correct and functionally desirable. It would have been well, Mr. Chairman, in this connection for me to suggest that it would have been an excellent gesture to have offered French communities within this province a French language service to these hearings. Canada is a community of communities. David has already talked to you about the three distinct streams of Canadians.

We also want to emphasize that the Canada clause recognizes the distinctness and value of Canadian citizenship. Canadian citizenship should be emphasized in its primacy over all or any claims of any society, nation, or community within this country. A Canada clause also should recognize historical rights of its people. A Canada clause should recognize the distinctness of the country's regions and the disparities, and it should recognize that the Canadian whole is greater than the sum of its parts and emphasize the regional responsibility inherent in the concept.

Finally, a Canada clause should assert and affirm the coexistence of the concept of individual rights and community and human rights.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. Well, you've given us a very comprehensive document, and obviously in the short time available to you, you've not been able to touch on more than some of the highlights. We will review it very carefully, and perhaps when we've done that, we may have some further dialogue with you on that subject.

There are some questions which have arisen from your comments.

Yes, Yolande.

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you very much. First of all, I want to tell you that the *Canadian Link* is one of the most thorough papers that I read, and I appreciate that. I learn a lot from it.

I think we're here today to listen to the presenters, but also presenters are listening to each other. It gives us an opportunity to speak to each other, maybe opportunities we don't get often enough.

What would you say to someone, and again we're talking perceptions, who feels strongly that the multicultural policy, which you quote, Bill C-93, and the Alberta policy are really just vote-getting mechanisms on the part of politicians? It's said so often. I'd like your comment. I think we need to clarify perceptions.

MR. BAI: This country being in a free and democratic society, everything is open in essence. I guess vote getting is one part of an exercise that we do, involvement between citizens and politicians. If you look at C-93 – I was a vice-chairman of the CMC, which is now the lobby representing this region as CMAC – you will see the long preamble describing the Canadian values. So we are looking at multiculturalism as, in essence, what we call the sum total of Canadian values. It's not something ethnic. So that's why in our paper, you see, we do not talk about the ethnic community per se. We talk about trying to connect from that to the larger community, as well connect the larger communities all down to the community. There is a role of the ethnic community – their papers, their preservation, and so on – but our job is to enhance the Canadian value, what we perceive there, so that includes all Canadians. We don't accept the definition that somehow Canada is all predetermined and an immigrant has to play a certain role and so on. To us Canada is: all who are here are Canadians.

MR. KOILPILLAI: I just want to add one more thing, Mrs. Gagnon, about our own province's leadership in promoting multiculturalism. We have been the founders of that in this province and salute the provincial leadership in that. Even at the federal level multiculturalism is often misunderstood, sometimes deliberately, I feel. For those who feel Canada has been defined already and there cannot be any redefinition of Canada or Canadian citizenship, I'd like to suggest to people that multiculturalism is a concept that allows an evolving redefinition and enhancement of Canada and its citizenship. It's not just a narrow vote-getting mechanism.

MRS. GAGNON: Do you think if we talked sometimes in terms of interculturalism that that might help with this perception?

11:54

MR. BAI: Yes. That's what I meant, the institutional reform dealing with the community relations. The communities: when they build each other, their cultural notion and so on, there is bound to be some misunderstanding, friction, and so on. We do

not have an institutional mechanism to address that dialogue and the communication and sense of sharing, as well as also resolve some of the disputes. We have in the Charter dealing with individual rights the Canadian Human Rights Act, but when it comes to the community – collective, minority, majority – we don't have anything. That's what's also a problem. That's why I believe the Quebec government finally got so fed up, moving to that area to put their community, and it became provincial. That's one of the difficulties at the present time. If we had that kind of institution, I don't think the Quebec government would have moved in that area.

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Fred.

MR. BRADLEY: We're a little bit behind schedule, so I'm going to pass at this point.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Just one comment. I thank you for your comprehensive brief. In the field of education, which of course is one that has arisen very often, I think we tend to beat ourselves on the head a bit on that subject. I wonder how you react to the report of the United Nations that says that Canada is the second-best country in the world in which to live, and one of the reasons for that is because of the high standards of education and our high literacy rate. That seems to be a fairly positive judgment of Canada compared to the rest of the world.

MR. KOILPILLAI: Well, you know, I have no quarrel with that. I'm an educator myself, and I agree with you wholeheartedly. I've been an educator in this province 31 years, and looking at the national level and the provincial level, we can do better, not that we haven't done well. We've done well. I agree with your assessment and the United Nations' judgment on that, but we can do well in international competitiveness, in keeping up the standard, and also helping our own Canadians' mobility if we have national standards and concurrent administration of it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Well, the question as to how we achieve national standards is the issue I think we're going to have to address.

MR. KOILPILLAI: Right.

MR. BAI: We are not interested in the top down. I think that's what probably your question may have implied. I think most of the discussion we're talking about: with greater citizen participation we could build from the ground up and we also bring the federal government down. That's why I'm into a regional solution. Otherwise, you see, we have P.E.I. and then we have Ontario. We can't compete in that sense, to equal. The United States has the same kind of problem in California and Rhode Island, but between there are 48 states to, you know, align and work it out. In Canada we don't have that. That's why we went to a regional base for a Senate rather than a provincial base for a Senate. Some of your colleagues' involvement . . . We think that's a more effective way of doing both, going upward and going downward.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much for your comments. We have one more presenter before the lunch break, and I'd like to invite him to come forward now.

MR. POCOCK: The final presenter is Doug Elves.

MR. ELVES: I'd like to thank the committee for its sensitivity in the choice of times for these hearings so that people who don't control their own work hours can attend. I'd certainly like to say, too, that if you make it through the entire hearings, I commend your stamina.

I have a couple of comments to make with this brief, basically a proposal which I feel addresses a fundamental problem of the Canadian state, and that is the denial of exactly what is the distinction between the Quebec people and the rest of Canada. To deny the status of Quebec as a distinct nation is to deny the status and unity of English Canada as a distinct nation. I propose a representative body to guarantee such unity: a founding-nation Senate.

The Quebecois meet all the criteria of a distinct nation: a people with a common territory, economy, and culture. Yet the status of its government as a mere provincial administration has muddied the waters of the Canadian Constitution ever since Confederation. Since all other provinces are regional governments within the Anglophone founding nation, they should have Senate representation equal to Quebec's representation only as a whole rather than individually. I propose that a founding-nation Senate be elected in numbers which give equal representation to Anglophone and Francophone. If each of the nine provinces and the two territories of Anglophone Canada elected, for instance, six Senators for a total of 66, then Quebec would also elect 66 Senators. The two equal halves would combine for a total of 132.

On the question of Canada's aboriginal peoples: these peoples, of which many now claim nationhood with hardening resolve and growing popular support, should also have founding-nation status but only as a whole. To achieve equal Senate representation, aboriginals would elect one-third of the Senators within each of the Anglophone and Francophone allotments. For example, two of Alberta's six Senators would be elected only by the native people of Alberta. Some may oppose representation that is so out of proportion to the native population, yet the House of Commons would still represent Canadians by population whereas the Senate would represent Canadians by founding nation. Each institution would thus have a distinct role in achieving democracy. All ethnic groups could nominate their own candidates, but except for the aboriginals these would seek election alongside all other candidates who must run where the language of state, commerce, and education is either French or English. Hence, each of Canada's three founding nations would elect 44 Senators, with the aboriginal Senators divided equally between Anglophone and Francophone Canada.

That is the main thrust of my brief, and of course there would be matters and problems that would have to be dealt with. Whether you have any questions on that, I don't know. I wouldn't want it to be necessarily questioned simply on the basis of the particular numeric formula; it's the process and the approach that I'm advocating.

I have a second part of my proposal, which is not necessarily . . . Well, it's certainly not concurrent, but it was an attempt to respond to the question of enhanced democracy in Canada, whereby we have the Commons providing representation by population, the founding-nations Senate providing representation by founding nations, and for enhanced democracy, with everyone wishing to speak for themselves, a direct democracy simply outlining a mechanism through modern technology to allow for frequent recourse to the general population through referenda. The natural reluctance for referenda presently is, I feel, mostly

because they're very cumbersome and expensive, but there would be another technique envisaged in the second part to deal with that. I could read it if you wish, or if you have any questions on the first part . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Elves. It's an interesting proposal, and it is one that is specific. I think really it's helpful for us to have some specific suggestions about how to deal with things. General comments are very helpful, obviously, to get a flavour for things, but this is a specific which we will certainly take under consideration.

I'd like to go on to the second part of your brief here, and it relates to the subject of the issue of how the public can have greater participation in making decisions. I'd just like to seek your views as to how the question is established. We had a suggestion yesterday that what we need to do is have a set of questions; we vote on the questions to see whether or not the questions accurately reflect the issue. That's one of the big concerns about referenda insofar as my study of them is concerned.

You will recall back in the Quebec referendum of 1980 there was a great deal of debate and discussion as to how to word the question to put to the people. Now, to take a moment on this too, in the direct referenda process in California, for example, the whole text of a Bill or an Act is put to the people, the whole thing. I've got a copy of the California booklet that went out in the last election, and it was as big as the Medicine Hat telephone directory because it contained the precise wording of each legislative proposal to be voted on by the electorate. I looked through it, and I'm a lawyer, and, believe me, I couldn't understand a lot of it. So there's that type of approach or the simple question. You know, it's pretty tough to determine. I just wondered if you had some thoughts on that.

12:04

MR. ELVES: I think you raise an important question. On the California problem, probably that's simply an early stage in the evolution of hammering out how to deal with referenda. One of the points I raise here in the second part of the proposal is that the positions of the parties or perhaps in this case the wording of a longer referendum question would simply be printed in the newsprint media beforehand so that people have access to it. Of course, it would be an important task of Parliament and its committees to work out a brief, succinct summary of that position. Basically, these referenda would be not so much to dot the i's of the referenda but to give guidance to the Parliament so that the people of Canada accept this basic proposal or that. An all-party committee would be perhaps responsible for hammering out and spending the long hours on working out a wording of a referendum and then having it addressed and accepted or not by the Parliament. Hopefully, the problems and contradictions would have been addressed by the committee, but if not, then the Parliament would still have its say. The wording of a referendum can be very loaded, but this process might work itself out anyway over time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I just raise it with you because Canadians have got to really start thinking about this. I think your suggestion as to the mechanics is a very interesting one, but it leaves unanswered the question as to how a question can be posed in a clear and understandable way so that the person who is voting on the issue knows what they're doing. Yes or no.

MRS. GAGNON: Okay, I have also a quick question, I hope. Once a referendum has been held on a given issue, how long would that remain as a guiding principle for the government of the day? You know how trends come and go. We could be subject to a seesaw kind of lawmaking, where one week people vote one way and two years down the road, because things are changing all the time and issues come and go, they would vote another way. So would it be binding for five years before we would ask the question again? Things do change very rapidly.

MR. ELVES: I don't know what the present law states about other referenda. Perhaps that would be a starting point. Obviously, this opens up the whole question, and there would have to be a lot of debate on exactly what it meant. Does it mean per parliamentary sitting or per government or until some new change comes along that has to be addressed by a different wording, whatever? You know, the normal course of Parliament, I'm sure, would deal with that, just as they have to deal with anything they decide on and then some new question coming up. They either have to vote on it or not, change it or not.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Gagnon's touched on a very interesting point, and that is the changing of public opinion. Before we conclude, I'd just like to put this thought to you. My guess is that if there'd been a referendum within two weeks of the signing of Meech Lake, it would have passed. There was a great euphoria in the country. People left the Langevin Block. The Legislatures had it pretty well all introduced. Public opinion polls immediately after that were very supportive of Meech Lake. Now, what happened? The government of Quebec and the Bélanger-Campeau report point this out: one single piece of legislation turned public opinion around 180 degrees in the rest of Canada, and the support for Meech Lake dropped like a stone. This is what we as legislators have to struggle with all the time in trying to determine what the public wants. So I just leave that thought with you folks. I know you're all thinking hard about this because you're here, and you wouldn't be here if you weren't really concerned Canadians and Albertans. I want to thank you, and thank you very much for your specifics. That's some interesting ideas in your proposal.

MR. ELVES: If I could, just before I leave, Mr. Horsman. Your last point is certainly apt, but I think we should accept the idea that if there's a will, there's a way. I think, you know, democracy is evolving, and people want to have a say. Meech Lake, for instance, was a major question in which people didn't completely understand the issues or didn't understand the exact document. I know the free trade debate was the same; it evolved. Some people who were initially for it eventually became against it, and perhaps there was the reverse too. That's going to be the situation in any case. The issue that Mrs. Gagnon raised is appropriate, and part of having these regular referenda would be consideration of how that is to be turned around or readdressed if necessary.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

We're going to take a lunch break now. We'll be back here sharp at 1 o'clock. We have a full afternoon of presentations, and I thank those of you who came to just listen and to hopefully help us learn as we move along. Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 12:11 p.m.]

