

1:05 p.m.

Monday, May 27, 1991

[Chairman: Mr. Horsman]

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** Ladies and gentlemen, we'll start the proceedings now. First of all, I'd like to welcome you all to this meeting of the select special committee of the Alberta Legislature on the issue of constitutional reform. First of all, I'll introduce myself. I'm the chairman. My name is Jim Horsman, and I'm the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Medicine Hat. I'll ask my colleagues who are also on the panel to introduce themselves in just a moment.

There are 16 Members of the Legislative Assembly who are on this committee, representing the three political parties in the Alberta Legislative Assembly. We divided the committee into two panels. This panel is here today in Lloydminster. There is another panel which is now conducting exactly the same type of hearing in the city of Fort McMurray. In that way we're able to cover twice as much territory in the course of this week. The committees commenced their hearings on Friday last week in Edmonton and in Calgary, and the committee meetings will conclude at the end of this week on Friday and Saturday, likewise in Edmonton and Calgary, with the panels reversing themselves. For example, this panel was in Edmonton last week and will return to Calgary. We have also made it clear that if it appears that it will be necessary to have additional hearings, if there is a request, we will consider that after we've concluded the proceedings that are now under way.

It's an important issue facing us as Canadians: what will happen with respect to Alberta in a new Canada? For those of you who have not yet had an opportunity of reviewing our discussion paper called *Alberta in a New Canada*, one will be available to you at the meeting. I think they're available in the hall.

This afternoon we only have three scheduled presentations. We had provided for 15 minutes for each presenter. However, as there are only three slots filled now, we may just take a little longer if there are questions from the panel to the presenters, and that would give you a little more time for your presentation. Likewise, if there are people who have appeared and have come this afternoon and feel that they would like to make a presentation from the floor without providing us with advance notice, we are pleased to hear from you and we will be happy to have you come forward and give us your views. We want to be informal, and we want to be relaxed about our opportunities for discussing this matter with each of you as Canadians.

Having said that, I'll ask now, starting on my left, for the members of the panel to introduce themselves.

**MR. HAWKESWORTH:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My name is Bob Hawkesworth. I'm the representative for Calgary-Mountain View in the Legislature and a member of the Official Opposition New Democrats.

**MRS. GAGNON:** My name is Yolande Gagnon. Bob Hawkesworth lives in my riding; he's one of my constituents. I have to be really careful of what I say with him sitting beside me here. I represent Calgary-McKnight.

**MR. ADY:** I'm Jack Ady, the MLA for Cardston constituency.

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

**MR. SEVERTSON:** Gary Severtson, MLA for Innisfail.

**MS BARRETT:** Pam Barrett, Edmonton-Highlands.

**MR. ROSTAD:** Ken Rostad, Camrose.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** On my left is Gary Pocock who is the secretary of the committee and a member of the staff of the Department of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

I'd like to welcome in the audience, as well, two of our colleagues from the Alberta Legislature: the Hon. Steve West, MLA for Vermilion-Viking and Minister of Recreation and Parks; and the Member for Lloydminster, our host MLA in this constituency, Doug Cherry. Welcome, gentlemen.

I'll ask now for Nancy Mereska to come forward and to join us at the table and to make her presentation.

**MRS. MERESKA:** Thank you. Can you hear me? Is that all right?

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** Can the people at the back of the hall hear? That's good, yes.

**MRS. MERESKA:** My name is Nancy Mereska, and I'm here making a presentation not only as an individual woman in Canadian society but also as the northern regional representative of the Alberta Status of Women Action Committee. Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to meet with you today and give you some thoughts regarding Canadian constitutional reform. I am grateful that this commission on constitutional reform is holding its public meetings in centres where all Albertans can have an opportunity to express their views on this very vital document.

I believe that the binding fabric of a nation is its Constitution. I was, however, a little shaken when the organizer who placed me on your agenda today told me that this committee is interested particularly in hearing from special interest groups. I am here today as the northeast regional representative of the Alberta Status of Women Action Committee. Since women make up 52 percent of the population of Canada, it is very difficult for me to accept the notion that we are a special interest group.

Regarding human rights. I feel that individual accessibility to education regardless of economic circumstance must be incorporated into our national human rights legislation and our Constitution. I was shocked into awareness of the travesty of accessibility to education in our own province when I found out that 30 percent of Albertans are illiterate. What are the statistics for the rest of

Canada? The fact that our postsecondary educational institutions are raising fees above and beyond reasonable levels is going to make accessibility to education even more difficult for the financially disadvantaged.

Poverty is a disability, and 64.9 percent of single families headed by women in Canada are poor. One in every five children in Canada lives in poverty. How many potential Einsteins or Marie Curies are going undeveloped because of poor nutrition and lack of monetary resources that pay for a better quality of life including health, happiness, and education? Therefore, social and economic rights outlined in a reformed Charter and entrenched in our Constitution would give all Canadians a constitutional right to those benefits and services which are required for a reasonable standard of living, such as

rights to health care, education, housing, and a guaranteed annual income.

I would be remiss if I did not address the debate regarding recognition of fetal rights. I quote from *Women and the Process of Constitutional Reform* by A. Anne McLellan.

An express recognition of foetal rights would place significant limitations upon a woman's right to control her body and the process of reproduction. To grant the foetus constitutional status, independent of its mother, opens the door to the possibility of state supervision of a woman's pregnancy and may provide other interested parties with further means by which to intervene in, and control, women's lives.

While I have at times personally grieved over the numbers of abortions being performed in this country and the loss of this valuable human resource, I grieve more over my conscious awakening of the plight of women in our society. Women still are the ones with the majority of responsibility in caring for children and all their needs. Women make, on average, 64 cents to every man-made dollar. Women suffer the indignities of violence at a rate of 1 woman in 4 in our society. When we travel in an airplane, we are told to take care of our own oxygen needs first and then those needs of our own children. I am convinced that when women are assured of their own economic, personal, and societal safety and security, we will see fewer abortions.

#### 1:15

Regarding national standards. I suggest that great caution be exercised in the area of complete decentralization, especially regarding the establishment of minimum health and social service standards throughout the nation, which requires both federal funding and standards. I also think that administrative powers could be effectively delegated so that the concerns of local areas could be addressed according to the standards set by federal jurisdiction.

However, I have had my own experience with complete frustration in this area when it comes to the standards set out and the moneys allocated both federally and provincially for shelters for battered women and effective programs for the prevention of violence in the family. Family violence is a national problem with devastating repercussions on the families inflicted with this malady and on our socioeconomic structure as a whole. The percentage of social dollars spent on the ripple effect of dysfunctional families is phenomenal. There should be national standards in place regarding life skills training classes in schools and acceptable funding levels established to support qualified therapeutic activities, both group and individual, to curb the malady of family violence in Canadian society. I am not speaking of psychiatric therapeutic activities, but rather meaningful community programs of prevention: programs that do not need expensive doctors and profiteering drug companies but do need funding pools for therapists and facilitators trained in the new perspective of prevention through behaviour modification and life skills management training courses.

Pay equity and the recognition of the contribution of women to our society must be endorsed in our Constitution. As Penney Kolm has pointed out in her book *Somebody Has To Do It*, in her chapter *Calculating the Dollar Value of Housework*:

Recent United Nations figures estimate that housework contributes the equivalent of \$85 billion a year in Canada and \$499 billion in the United States. That's a heck of a lot of money. Or rather, it's a lot of unrecompensed time . . . But waiting for a "good government" to initiate necessary changes is like counting on a "good husband" to provide

lifetime security. You might as well believe in the tooth fairy.

Well, in meeting with you today, I am giving you notice that I am putting my domestic tooth under my pillow and praying that the constitutional tooth fairy will consider that unpaid work contributes to 40.2 percent of the gross national product of this country and that the women of Canada in the work force can be assured pay equity and that the women of Canada at home can be assured pension plans and benefits for their labours.

Regarding internal barriers. Some years ago I did a study on internal barriers between provinces in Canada. Unfortunately, I gave it to my then MP David Kilgour and didn't keep a copy for myself. Maybe David still has it somewhere. When I moved to Canada some 24 years ago, I was shocked to find that I was living in a country that is divided east and west. Recently there have been calls from various groups and political fronts that the have provinces should be contributing substantially to the have-not provinces. I have not found that many changes happening to settle the problem of regional disparity in Canada over the last few years. The advent of the Reform Party has intensified the fact that the problem still exists. One would not have to consider the question of the equalization payments between the have and the have-not provinces if the existing barriers regarding trade and economic opportunity were dissolved effectively. Canada is so bent on developing effective trade packages with other countries, yet regional economic disparity is a real problem inside our own borders. This includes working out an agreement with Quebec to keep it a part of our nation.

Here in Alberta we celebrate our ethnic differences every year at a special heritage festival in Edmonton. In rural Alberta we keep our ethnic traditions alive by teaching our children the traditions and dances of our ancestors. It is time for Canada to celebrate Quebec and *vive la différence* and recognize the contribution that this province gives to our country. Where have you seen a headline that reads "Welcome to Canada, Quebec"? Instead, we despair at Quebec's bigness, its demographic and industrial clout. We fear its real or perceived political power. We only see in here the negatives on the news. What is the truth about Quebec? Where do we stand with Quebec? Here we are discussing what we want to see in a Constitution for Canada as whole, and we do not even know if we will have a whole Canada a year from now.

In regard to the special issue of women and marital breakdown. Federal standards regarding divorce and maintenance enforcement must be entrenched in our Constitution as well, unfortunately. If these powers are given to the provinces in a decentralization movement, then women who find themselves trying to escape violence could find themselves trapped in one province or area because of each province having the right to set its own standards regarding marital failure.

Regarding provincial equality. Enough cannot be said on this subject. Canada must have equal representation somewhere in Ottawa, and a triple E Senate is our only hope. I am sickened when I read the disgusting amount of money that is being paid to old party favourites who have been handed a seat in the Senate because someone in a position of power liked them. A triple E Senate will certainly give each province the opportunity to have a designated power authority in Ottawa that has an equal voice with the other provinces. This would be very progressive indeed.

I am very concerned about the infiltration of the privatization of health care in Canada. In observing centres that contract out to social services, and also where a fee is charged to individual families, particularly in the care of handicapped people, I have

questioned the quality of care these people are receiving. It is obvious that these centres are for-profit facilities, not for-care facilities. I am totally against setting up health care facilities for profit. It usually means that poorly trained staff are hired at minimum or not much better wages, that the ratio of staff to those served is stretched to the limit, and that the shareholders in such enterprise rake in profits without having to account for the quality of the care centre they have invested in. It is morally wrong as far as I am concerned. National standards for health care of every type must be entrenched in our Constitution.

Regarding public input. I think that the idea of a constitutional convention of Canadians from all provinces is a wonderful one. I would be very supportive of such a convention.

Thank you for hearing my views today. I realize I've covered a broad topic, but I studied a lot of material to make this presentation. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. Members of the panel will want to ask questions, I'm sure.

May I just say at the outset, however, that I'm sorry if you got the impression that it was only special interest groups who were encouraged. Quite the contrary. We wanted people, individual Albertans, to come forward, and whoever gave you that message I think was not correctly interpreting the wishes of the select committee because we, of course, will hear from groups and organizations, but we do very much want to hear from Albertans, individual Albertans, during the course of these hearings. So I apologize for that comment being made to you. In any event, it didn't dissuade you from coming forward.

MRS. MERESKA: Not at all.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, Jack Ady, Yolande.

MR. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In your opening remarks you made some comments about the percentage of illiterate people in Canada. I believe you quoted 30 percent.

MRS. MERESKA: In Alberta.

MR. ADY: In Alberta?

MRS. MERESKA: Uh huh.

MR. ADY: Could you tell me what that's based on? Is it based on a grade level of achievement, or is that just a statistic that someone has arrived at? I know that some of the federal statistics to define illiteracy are based on those with no high school; for instance, grade 9 and below is considered illiterate. I guess I have a little trouble with that, but I'd just like to know what your statistic was based on there.

MRS. MERESKA: Okay. You're correct. Only these statistics are based on a grade 6 or below level of education and on the numbers of immigrants who are not literate in English or French, either of our national languages. Well, it's a statistic that was actually given to me in a sociology class. I'm just finishing a sociology degree. I'm sorry I don't have the source with me, but that's what it's based on, grade 6 or lower. I was shocked too. I couldn't believe it: 30 percent of Alberta.

1:25

MR. ADY: A supplementary back on that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could you hold it a moment; we seem to have a technical malfunction here.

Okay.

MR. ADY: In view of you mentioning immigrants as being part of the group that have grade 6 or less, would you advocate then that immigration laws be tightened to the point that we do not allow people into Canada who have less than a grade 6 or grade 10, 12 – some level – in order to assure that they bring their literacy with them, so to speak?

Just let me ask you one more question, because I only get one supplementary. The second one that I'd like to ask you is you indicated that it was essential that we have a triple E Senate. Would you then advocate that Alberta take the position that we do not enter into a signed agreement on this round of constitutional discussions unless we are assured of the triple E Senate up front?

MRS. MERESKA: Okay. To your second question, a definite yes. To the first question, a definite no. As a matter of fact, in the world camps right now, the refugee camps, there are more women and children who are kept back because they are considered undesirable immigrants as far as the labour force is concerned, as far as educational institutions are concerned. Certainly we should not close our doors to immigrants because of the literacy factor. We should have more education programs in place. The English as a Second Language program, for instance, not only in Alberta but across the nation, is a travesty. For instance, I'm qualified to teach English as a Second Language, but if I want to, I have to go out, and I have to contract, I have to find places that have the moneys, the funding available for me to have this contract, and it's really quite the go-around. There's no definite English as a Second Language program in place that's funded regularly in this province.

So, definitely not to your first, but definitely yes to your second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Gagnon.

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you. You mentioned at the outset something about the fact that you felt human rights should be in the Charter. My understanding is that all of the individual rights are in the Charter, and I'm wondering what additional ones you would like to see in the Charter. That's my first question.

MRS. MERESKA: Okay. I realize human rights are in the Charter, but there has been talk of a reform of the Charter as well, so I've more or less blended that in with my remarks here. Equity for women across the board: no doubt. Also, my remarks regarding the great debate right now that's going on for the rights of the fetus separate from the mother: I believe that the mother's rights have to be cared for first.

MRS. GAGNON: So what you were saying was that you'd want the Charter to become part of the Constitution in the sense that it's sacrosanct; it's sacred; you don't fool around with the Charter.

MRS. MERESKA: That's right.

MRS. GAGNON: Okay. My second question. I'm the Advanced Education critic, and I was very interested in your comments about getting rid of internal barriers and postsecond-

dary fees and how they're keeping a lot of qualified people out and so on. When you say get rid of internal barriers, are you talking of a common standard of degrees and what constitutes a degree and portability of degrees, of high school diplomas, that kind of thing? Could you expand just a bit on that?

MRS. MERESKA: Well, actually my internal barriers had to do with commerce in Canada. I realize I read this quite fast, but you've brought up an interesting point, and I'm glad to comment on this. We in rural Alberta, particularly right now, are suffering a great brain drain. Our youth aren't staying around rural Alberta; they're going to the urban centres where they can find work and where they can find education. So we see the brain drain greatly in our smaller centres. Also, the portability of accredited work across provinces: that is something that really needs to be taken a look at as well in dissolving these barriers to trade and commerce within our own country. So I'm glad you brought that up.

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Bob Hawkesworth, and then Pam Barrett.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for your presentation this afternoon. Some have said that the renewal of Canada will only come by making the provinces stronger. In fact, the Allaire report in Quebec advocates the federal government getting totally out of a number of areas and in areas of shared jurisdiction that the province take over a number of those areas. Yet you came here today telling us that you think the federal government maybe even has a stronger role to play on the national scene, particularly in education, which is an exclusively provincial jurisdiction under the present Constitution. So how do we reconcile sort of this pressure from some people with your proposal? Do you really feel that the renewal will come from greater strengthening of federal institutions instead of greater strengthening of provincial powers?

MRS. MERESKA: Not necessarily a greater strengthening of the federal institution but keeping the federal institution that we have. I am against a lot of the decentralization measures, especially when it comes to the health care, as I mentioned a couple of times. If we decentralize when it comes to the divorce laws, in Canada this would be a travesty, especially for any woman who is trying to get away from an abusive situation in B.C., for instance, and decides to move to eastern Canada and finds that the laws governing what's going to happen to her life there are completely different from the laws in B.C. and that's she's trapped; she's trapped to a certain area.

In education, this is something about the Canadian government that I've never really been able to come to terms with. Not only are we able to carry the credibility of high school diplomas or college diplomas across borders in Canada, but when it comes to the national phenomena that I addressed here of family violence and the different educational programs that are available if only the proper funding pools could be tapped at the right time. One of my main concerns coming here is the issues of women, and particularly women who have suffered violence or are in violence and the need for the closing down of the ripple effect, the need for the recognition that there has to be a steady funding pool established nationally to deal with our national problem.

So strengthen what we have federally and provincially together, but the idea of this decentralization I can see can have a negative ripple effect on women overall when it comes to equity, anything of that nature. Leave it up to each province, and each province is ruled by different interest groups. Who's going to rule the interest groups, and who's going to make the final decisions in the end?

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Do I have one more?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. One supplementary.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you. You also mentioned in your comments about celebrating the difference that Quebec has with the rest of Canada. Should there be some way that we recognize Quebec's difference in the Constitution and provide perhaps some different powers to Quebec to help it preserve its difference?

MRS. MERESKA: I think Quebec's difference is automatically preserved. Each province is just as unique and has just as much to contribute to this nation as a whole as the other. I think you're speaking about possible sovereignty association, or . . . I'm sorry; I don't know the political jargon that goes with this particular issue. In fact, I think that each province should be recognized equally: one-tenth, one-tenth, one-tenth.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Okay. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pam Barrett, and then Ken Rostad.

We're taking a little longer than your 15 minutes, but I hope you'll appreciate that because we don't have as many presentations today, we have a little extra time, and therefore I hope you don't mind answering a few questions.

Pam and then Ken.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, we don't often get a chance to be thorough is the other way of saying that.

You mentioned the need for national health standards to be expressed in the Constitution, and I just want a little bit of clarification here. I assume that what you're talking about is something like what was in the Meech Lake accord only a different wording. Now, remember the fight was objectives versus standards. Do you remember that?

MRS. MERESKA: Yes.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, okay. So what you're saying, I assume, is that we're not talking about, you know, "It shall be in the Constitution that if you break your leg in any part of this country, you shall have it mended in any part of this country." You're saying put in standards, use the word "standards" when it comes to the cost-shared programs like health care. Is that right?

1:35

MRS. MERESKA: Yes.

MS BARRETT: Yeah. Okay. I suspected, but I just want to make sure.

If you were to do that . . . Now, you know that education is also cost shared, right, although it's less and less cost shared as the feds introduce legislation to diminish the funding that they give to certain provinces like Alberta. Do I assume from what

you said about national again that you would want to see education in that cost-shared concept also entrenched in the Constitution? It is currently not.

MRS. MERESKA: Well, my concerns are this, and I said it in bold print in my write out: poverty is a disability. I am more and more concerned as I see postsecondary institutions raising their fees. The cost of books is phenomenal, you know, the costs for education, housing. Well, the overall cost is something that 25 years ago we would have just said, "Forget it; I can't do that." Today I'm afraid that young people are saying, "Forget it; I can't do that."

I know that in rural Alberta we have to push for special programs, that our young people in our high schools are not scared by the prospect of having to go to an urban centre to be educated by the overall costs, particularly in a farm family where they know what it's like to live on a yearly income and then make that income do till the next harvest, knowing that at the end of the year once again they're just waiting for their harvest profits so they can live again for another year. This hand-to-mouth situation that so many of our youth and young people have to live with in their growing-up years I'm afraid deters their, shall we say – what's the phrase I want? – self-fulfilling prophecy of even aspiring to higher education. Then when you get up against the roadblocks of the costs of education, certainly something more has to be done to recognize the brainpower of our youth in Canada and to do something to develop that brainpower.

MS BARRETT: Yeah. I understand the thrust of it. Specifically with respect to recommendations for constitutional change, would you be advocating that? In the old-style language, such as the Meech Lake accord where under cost-shared programs there was a national debate about whether you want standards or objectives . . . I'm asking you, because I think there's going to be a national debate about education with respect to the Constitution: do you want to see some specifics with respect to the education system put right into the Constitution?

MRS. MERESKA: Oh, yes.

MS BARRETT: Okay.

MRS. MERESKA: That's written right here. I'm sorry I led you around the mulberry bush on answering that.

MS BARRETT: That's okay. It was a nice mulberry bush, and I got the point. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ken Rostad.

MR. ROSTAD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Not having had the opportunity to read your brief, which isn't your fault . . .

MRS. MERESKA: I couldn't make enough copies.

MR. ROSTAD: No. I understand that. We'll get that as well.

I'm having a little trouble with your standards or your idea that education should be enshrined in the Constitution as a national responsibility. When the other panelists were asking questions, it seemed to be that you always came back to the idea that it was poverty or some other – family violence, something like that – and I heard that you thought that perhaps education

by making it national would help to overcome these. I'd like you to expand a little bit on that if you could.

MRS. MERESKA: Oh, no. I didn't say that at all. What I'm asking for are national standards in education policies for helping to alleviate family violence; that is, the life skills education programs that are being offered actually be a part of the national fabric of education. Not only that, but when it comes to the accessibility to education, my worry is that because of the statistics of the numbers of children in our nation living in poverty, they do not have this accessibility. To get this accessibility, unfortunately . . .

I see this over and over again. I see a student who is able to walk into a classroom and absorb knowledge. I speak from experience. I have fraternal twin sons. One could walk into a classroom and absorb knowledge without even opening a book. I don't even remember that child opening a book to study at home. He was a straight A student with no problems, the Rutherford scholarship, the whole bit. His fraternal twin brother had a dyslexia problem. I fought for that kid the whole 18 years I was at home rearing him. Now they are both premed students in separate colleges. Once this other boy had his computer and had his WordPerfect spellcheck program, his marks compared to his brother's. Once his brother got into university, he had to develop study habits. The boy had developed them because he had to learn study habits the whole time he was getting 60, 70 percent and even less in school and having teachers tell him that he would never be college material. They're both premed students right now.

Not only that, but these students who develop the study skills through having to study for the marks that they get know how to study once they get in university. The scholarships, the Rutherford scholarships, all this, that, and the other: what are they handed to? They're handed to the kids who can walk into a classroom and absorb knowledge without hardly having to open a book. It makes me ill, because how many of those kids would be achieving in university and have the accessibility to the costs of university if their abilities were recognized instead of their academic achievements? So often they're not only poor financially; they're poor because of the ability of recognition from the people who are in charge of handing out the moneys to get them into university.

MR. ROSTAD: I just wanted to ask a supplementary. I'm still having a little trouble figuring out how making education a national responsibility or national standard is going to help in that. I guess I also come from a different way. Who's going to set those standards, and are you maybe talking more about who is going to fund it? You're getting at the fact that it should be open-ended funding. I personally don't think there's a problem with access in education right now. Certainly, there are some people that don't have the financial resources to go without accessing finances, but anybody that's qualified can borrow.

MRS. MERESKA: Then they have to go through such a gauntlet.

MR. ROSTAD: I went to university by borrowing.

MRS. MERESKA: I think we all did.

MR. ROSTAD: I mean, I'm not flagging my own financial status, but I don't see how setting it as a national responsibility . . .

MRS. MERESKA: Education is a national responsibility, Mr. Rostad. I agree to disagree with you.

MR. ROSTAD: I'm not trying to be argumentative. I'm just trying to find out why you think Ottawa having control of education is going to make education better across Canada than the individual provinces, and that's essentially your theme I think.

MRS. MERESKA: I've already discussed with Mrs. Gagnon the fact that in Canada we do not even have portability of degrees and credibility across provincial boundaries in various areas. We have provinces where children go 13 years to get a high school diploma and others where they go 12. We have provinces that have excellent programs for the learning disabled and other provinces that are 25 years behind. We have provinces that have really easy qualifications to get into university, and we have others that just keep upping the qualifications and upping them and upping them. My own son is going to be looking at going to medical school in another province because now the standards at the U of A are just sky-high. I could go on and on, if we wanted to carry this argument further.

I think that education is a national responsibility. It's a national responsibility for the immigrants that are coming into our land. It's a national responsibility to keep our brains in Canada. It's a national responsibility to keep our brains in every province and to be developing this nation. Instead we put out billions and billions and billions of dollars to go on free trade packages with the U.S. Now we're watching \$1.3 million a week be spent in the U.S. to have free trade packages with Mexico, which has for years already had the Maquiladoras corridor going 100 to 125 miles into Mexico where the U.S. has set up over the last 25 years some 2,900 companies already using Mexican labour at 67 cents an hour to bring their profiteering products back into the U.S. or Canada to sell them. They've already got those all set up. Why do they want to drag Canada into this?

If you want to debate this issue on a global prospect, I will with you. Education is a national responsibility.

1:45

MR. ROSTAD: I wasn't trying to argue against. I was just trying to get an understanding of how you want it to be national. I'm not even saying I don't agree with you.

MRS. MERESKA: I hear you being argumentative when you say that you don't think it should be.

MR. ROSTAD: No, I was trying to get you to explain to me why it should be and how it would work any better than it is now.

MRS. MERESKA: Well, I think it would work very much better if there were standards set nationally and shared provincially.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I don't want to be argumentative, but could you reconcile your views with the United Nations report which came out last week which said Canada is the second best country in the world in which to live and it is so in part because of our high educational standards and achievements?

MRS. MERESKA: I'm sorry; I haven't read that report nor have I seen the reports of it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I'd recommend it to you.

MRS. MERESKA: I would like to read it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good; I hope you do.

Thank you very much for your presentation.

Paul Mahe. Welcome.

MR. MAHE: Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman. Alberta in a New Canada is the title. My name is Paul Mahe, retired in St. Paul. I am a veteran of World War II and served in Newfoundland with the Edmonton Fusiliers, 2nd Battalion, under Maj. Saul\* of Chauvin, and W force in St. John's, Newfoundland, before it became a province, under Brig. Goodeve\* as a staff sergeant. Also, I served Robinson Stores of Canada as a superintendent of retail stores for 26 years in northern Alberta and in the two constitutional languages of the land. Also, I was in charge of the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires in Ottawa in 1978 in both constitutional languages.

Mr. Chairman, I went around the world once with Mrs. Mahe. We found out that we had the nicest country in the universe, the second largest in area, the richest in natural resources, of which many are undeveloped. We want to keep it that way.

It is close to 500 years now that we have a new Canada. It is composed of all the nationalities of the world. It appears, ladies and gentlemen, that the disunity of the land is caused more by the language than anything else. Mr. Chairman, I have one proposition to make: that we centralize the department of education. The present Constitution is based on a bilingual status now, since over 100 years. In order to be functional, it should be on a federal basis, and it should be centralized similarly to the human heart. How would you ladies and gentlemen see the body functioning with 12 hearts in one body? I compare the department of education to the heart: it feeds the body. The heart feeds all the limbs of the body; relatively, the department of education should feed every square inch of the periphery of Canada.

If Switzerland has the most powerful banks in the world, being a polyglot country, and it is functional, we should also be in a position to operate on a national status bilingually. By the way, in parenthesis, both my mum and dad were Celtic, and they spoke the language. We wanted to learn that language too, but dad said, "We'll look at the Constitution, see what it says." He told us, "You guys," - there were five of us - "you learn how to read, speak, and write the constitutional languages of the land." Today we thank him for that. This is why my suggestion is that we should have one centralized department of education and eliminate the provincial ones. We would eventually have a smooth and united country. If need be, and this is only a suggestion, all the members who operate functionally on a constitutional basis should also be doubly remunerated and others reduced.

This, Mr. Chairman, quite concise and to the point, is my opinion on how to operate logically in this vast country with members who can speak, read, and write in the Canadian language.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity. Thank you for the favour of expressing our views before it is too late.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Mahe.

Yes, questions?

Pam Barrett.

\*These spellings could not be verified.

MS BARRETT: I wonder about some of the technical implications of following your advice. If we were to say that education should be specifically entrenched in the Canadian Constitution as a federal jurisdiction, knowing that there are differences between provinces and knowing that – I mean, you've just got to be real about this, right? – local history varies and stuff like that, how would you apportion curriculum development, for example, to reflect both realities? Would you say that you give in the Constitution a specific formula so that the feds, say, have 75 percent? You know, the concept that the national government would participate to developing 75 percent of the curriculum and the provincial government would develop the other 25 percent? Something like that?

MR. MAHE: My suggestion, Pam, is to follow the philosophy of Switzerland. It operates smoothly, and they're very powerful financially. They're a polyglot country. We were in Switzerland twice. I think there are four official languages there, and we're only coping with two in Canada.

MS BARRETT: I understand, but what I was talking about, I guess, was more geographical. The fact of the matter is that you can fit about 500 Switzerlands into Alberta, and I don't know how many million into Canada, right?

MR. MAHE: Right.

MS BARRETT: So would you make any provision for allowing for regional or provincial differences? Which I don't think are just perceived; I think they are real.

MR. MAHE: What I would suggest, Pam, is that we have a referee in those areas. Now we have fax machines, we have computers, and everything would be reported immediately to the centre like the heart feeds the limbs of the body. This is my relativity. You can put a hundred Switzerlands in Canada; I know that. But communication is no problem today, is it, Jim?

MS BARRETT: That's true.

MR. MAHE: There's no problem in communication in 1991. There was in 1935.

MS BARRETT: You've got that right.  
Thank you.

MR. MAHE: You're welcome.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let me just get myself clear on your comments. You regard the language issue between French and English as being the main problem confronting the country today. Your solution, then, is to give to the federal government the responsibility for education, and thereby, through a process of the federal government, they would require everyone in Canada to be bilingual, and that would eliminate the problem. Is that correct?

MR. MAHE: No, it's not my point, Jim. I took five years of Greek and Latin. I took it within the class, you know, and we could speak Latin in the fifth year. In this case it would take probably 25, 35, 40 years. I'll be long gone. This country would run smooth, because it would operate relatively to the human heart. It would feed every root of this country, and we'd like to keep it this way because we have the second largest in the

world. As I said when we came back to Canada, we love this country and we want to keep it together. We're on the verge of separating it. I don't like to see it that way, and I'm sure many Canadians will feel the same way as I do.

1:55

MR. CHAIRMAN: But the end result would be that everyone in Canada eventually would be bilingual.

MR. MAHE: Well, understand what's on your dollar bill, the languages on your dollar bill that you and I use every day. Logical?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right. That, of course, would apply in Quebec as well.

MR. MAHE: The same way, Quebec as anywhere else. I'm not partisan of Quebec. As I say, I'm of Celtic decent. I'd like to follow a Constitution of any country in the world, and we know we're in the best country in the world. All we need now is the finance and to have competence in the administration of the finance, like Nancy mentioned before me. Once that's taken over, we should sail at high seas in the world and help a lot of underdeveloped countries.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, thank you very much for your very thought-provoking comment.  
Yes, Bob Hawkesworth.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to thank you also for your presentation, Mr. Mahe. I think sometimes in these hearings we tend to focus on what's wrong with the country as opposed to what's right. I think many of us have been hearing from a large number of Albertans who feel that we should abandon bilingualism; that it's not appropriate for Alberta and Alberta is largely English speaking, largely unilingual. Given sort of this point of view that many Albertans have expressed, what would you say in reply to them? In your view, why should we be emphasizing two languages more strongly in Alberta instead of what many are advising us and that's to back away from the use of two languages?

MR. MAHE: Good question, Bob. Quebec is over there with a big province, and it's been there for close to 500 years, since the Celtic developer of Canada. It wouldn't be a necessity that you in Calgary speak both languages, but eventually your children's children would be fluent in all of them. Quebec would have to learn English, and all the people in the Northwest Territories would learn both languages, as they are now. There are 300, 400 languages in Canada. At least we should speak what's on our dollar bill, shouldn't we? Right?

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. I think all the members of the panel would agree with you that we do indeed have the best country in the world. For your years of service to the country in the Canadian military and otherwise we thank you very much, and for your experience we acknowledge that and appreciate your thoughts as you came before us today.

Thank you very much.

MR. MAHE: Thank you very much. Have a good day, all of you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Bob Cheshire.

MR. CHESHIRE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, task force members. Today I want to speak briefly about my deep feelings for Canada in the first half of my life. Secondly, I want to just briefly go into my disappointments with Canada in the last half of my life and try and look at what happened and then my hopes for a future Canada. I will have a last-resort position, because I think in Canada today we may be faced with that last resort.

My wife, Ruby, and myself are both seniors. We were born in Canada. Both sets of parents came from somewhere else in the world. Where is unimportant, because those parents, all four of them, came to Canada because it was no good back home. They wanted to build a new life here and raise their families in a good country, and they did. These things were accomplished. We grew up during the 1930s. The thing that both our parents can be remembered for: they really wanted us to be proud of Canada and to be good strong Canadians.

I finished my growing-up years during the Second World War. In the last year of that war I joined our services, and I didn't even need any training. I was that strong a Canadian. I would have fought anybody, anywhere, anytime for what we have here in Canada. I was 16 years old.

Ruby and I met in 1947 and were married in 1949. One year later the Korean war broke out. I remember the morning well when Canada over the airwaves asked for specifically veterans to re-enlist so that they could send them overseas quickly to serve Canada during that war. I joined that day. I returned wounded from that war after two years.

Ruby and I took up our married life and did many, many things to make a living. Of course, at that time there were no social programs to speak of. We raised three sons over our lifetime, all doing very well. They're in their 30s today. During some of that time we were farming, for some 30 years. For over 20 years of this I served on county councils, hospital boards, school boards. While I was doing this, my wife took care of the farm.

Now, what happened? I think somewhere in the 1960s we took a bad turn. We always had problems in Canada. They were understandable, because we're 4,000 miles wide and there's no doubt that any country in the world has great regional differences if they're that large. We don't all have the same wishes, needs. It's bound to be different from area to area. Sometime during the '60s someone thought we'd better get our Constitution back. They found it over in England in the dust. It seems to me about that time, when we repatriated it, we all wanted bills of rights. We got them at every level of government, maybe in too much of a hurry: things that we did not include in them and things that perhaps we put in there that were too many rights.

About this time politicians started to put in pension plans. Two terms and you had your pension. Well, then greed took over and things of that nature. You know, why not stay here for those full two terms? Don't get knocked out in the first one. They would promise everything, and they will promise anything today to anybody to make those two terms. After the two terms are up, they'll do the same thing: promise everything to everybody so that they can increase that pension as time goes on. I believe political life in Canada should be something you want to do to serve this country. Of course you need remuneration, but it's certainly not a profession that should be pensioned.

The French issue got involved in this very strongly. It's always been there, but it came really forward since the '60s and bilingualism. All provinces in Canada should be the same.

Multiculturalism was only a method where these politicians sought to divert our attention from bilingualism and the French issue. Any time you say that this group of people because their culture is different than this group of people – you've got problems started. They look at each other. We had multiculturalism long before that time. As I grew up, if I wanted some other culture, I merely had to drive to the next town, or my parents would take me and we got the other culture. But we were all Canadians.

2:05

Then we've gone on to grants and social programs in this country, and we serve everybody and look after them. Oh, there are some that fall through the cracks, but we basically have some kind of care for everybody from the cradle to the grave. Again, we've made all people greedy. We've taken responsibilities away from our people, the responsibilities to look after themselves, to raise their families, and to look after themselves as they're seniors. I never thought we could do it, but we did: we spoiled the seniors too.

Now, what kind of Canada would I like to see? I've explained that we're so broad that we cannot possibly all get along in every area, and we all have differences. So we must have a confederation of regions of some type. I'm not a member of that party, I've never been to their meetings, but I do feel that the regions of this country are a more logical place to have that second stage of government than our provinces. Our provinces were set up in this nation because of meridians and various topography, not because of any regional need or difference. So it's time we relooked this thing over and said, "This region is different and has special needs." We'd get along together much better. In my example, I would possibly see the eastern maritimes as one region. Quebec, of course. I appreciate Quebec. We've been there on occasion, and I really enjoy the culture of Quebec. In fact, I'm proud as a Canadian to have old Quebec City, the only place on this continent – and we've been to all of them – where you can say they have preserved something the way it was. It's great. Ontario would be another region because of its large industrial, financial base. Then there'd be the prairies; they have similarities. I'm not sure whether British Columbia would be in that region or whether they would prefer another of their own. Then there are our Northwest Territories and the Yukon. They should become a territory and have their government.

These regions would have to be set up on some sort of plebiscite basis of the people. It would mean a lot of work, a lot of study, a lot of information going out and coming back, but it would have to end up with a plebiscite of the people of those regions to choose this and choose the place they want to be in. Of course, then the majority must rule.

These regions would have one Legislature. The provinces would no longer be here. The federal government, to me, would be pared right down. There would be one House of Commons. I would prefer if there were no Senate at all, but if we had to have a Senate, then of course a triple E. The federal level would care only for national issues, things like defence, currency, and foreign affairs. French and English would be the official languages at the federal level, but with no discrimination, by amount of wages or any other way, of an individual working with that government or at that level who only spoke the one. The regions would then choose their official languages, either English or French or both. I would want no trade barriers between our provinces. All Canadians would be able to move from region to region as freely as they move from town to town. They would be able to open a business. They would be able to farm in any

of them or own farmland, and we can't today. Anything. You would be a Canadian. You would move as you wish, region to region.

I believe all taxation should be at one level, and that would be the regional level. And I mean all taxation; there would be no other taxes allowed. This taxation, whether an income tax, a sales tax, or whatever, would be one taxation. From there it would be shared upwards and downwards to the local government. No deficit budgets would be allowed at any level, and I mean legislated or into the Constitution if necessary. There would, of course, be time required to have this happen.

All terms of office, I feel, should be four years. I believe we should be able to vote for our Prime Minister of Canada and our Premiers as individuals. I realize this would do away with part of the party opposition systems we have. A Prime Minister, for instance, would have to operate for four years even though he may not have the full seats in the House of Commons.

I don't believe that Canada needs royalty. When I say this, there is no reason why we cannot welcome and receive the royal family in Canada the way they just did in the United States, but it has been a thorn in the side of Canada, and I believe it should be removed.

I have a last resort position, and it is only there if in 1992 what we all fear happens, Quebec separates from this country. Let's all do our utmost to see that that does not happen, but if it does, then we must form a western Canada.

In closing, I want to say that I am not a member of any political party in Canada. I have voted for every political party that's been in my area over the years I've been eligible to vote, except one, and that's the Communist Party.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman and task force members.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Cheshire, for your comments. You are obviously very concerned as a Canadian.

I just want to comment on your service as a member of the Canadian forces in Korea. Your member of the Legislature here shares that same distinction, as I recall. I was in Korea several times, but on one occasion attended the Canadian memorial at Kap'nyong, which of course was the site of a famous battle with the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. Just a little anecdote really: the wreath-laying there, which I performed, brought out quite a large crowd of Koreans to observe that particular ceremony. In speaking to members of the crowd afterwards, several of them said to me, mostly through interpreters, that they didn't know much about Canada but everything they did know was that it one of the finest countries in the world, and they were extremely grateful for the fact that people would come from Canada to defend them. It is something I have never forgotten. I thought I'd just pass that on to you as a Korean veteran. You have not been forgotten for the service you performed in that country.

Now other members of the panel would like to ask you some questions, I'm sure. Jack, Bob, Yolande, Gary.

2:15

**MR. ADY:** Thank you, Mr. Cheshire, for obviously an in-depth, well-thought-out presentation of your position on what you would hope Canada to achieve. Some of the things you would like to see happen in Canada I suppose are not too different from what's developing in the European Economic Community. They're really heading towards that community of regions there. I suppose we have to wait to see how successful that is, but certainly they are emerging as a very powerful economic bloc and probably a very viable social bloc.

One of the things I'd like to ask you to see if you've considered this: in the event we were to move to a community of regions or a country of regions, I suspect people outside Canada would view that as the breakup of Canada. Today just federally we owe something in excess of \$400 billion – well, about \$400 billion – to someone else, some being Canadians, some outside of Canada, and because we only have 26 million people in our country, we rely on outside investment to quite a degree. Do you see a lot of concern by the people owed from outside Canada and those who might consider investing in Canada if we moved in the direction you're advocating? They might feel that we're bankrupt and we're breaking up and our survival as a country is in jeopardy. What are your views on that?

**MR. CHESHIRE:** Yes, certainly during the first periods of this transition there would be concern by investors at all levels, both within and outside Canada. However, what I am speaking of would take a considerable number of years to do, and with the view that we do have areas of the world that are forming trading blocs and associations and other countries – for instance, Russia – perhaps will be going in a similar direction, I believe given the time it would take, there would be enough understanding that it would not be a serious problem. The greatest problem, of course, would be our large neighbour to the south, the United States, which does get very nervous if something happens to a close, neighbouring country, especially Canada. But there again, I believe they are a forward-looking nation. They've had the ability to adjust and change with the times like no other, and I think over time, the time that would be required to do this transition, even they would have no problem with it.

**MR. ADY:** I just have one other question. I think we're all aware of the sort of fast track Quebec is presently on with taking positions and referendums to declare whether they will move towards a sovereignty association or a sovereign country. How would you see us holding Quebec within Canada long enough to have the length of time you speak of to carry this out? Would you try to get them to negotiate staying in Canada while this comes into place over a 10-year period? What would you really expect to do to keep them from rushing headlong into some circumstance other than what we presently have with them?

**MR. CHESHIRE:** I think some of the things Quebec has as problems are perhaps partially answered in what I presented, whereby their region could have both languages if they chose or one. I believe they would not need that clause that was so hard to get around during the Meech Lake accord where they were a distinct society, because they could develop their society into whatever they really wish to without saying the word. So I believe they could be talked into a time period instead of this aiming at 1992. Maybe we could get them into a time period of a number of years, and the longer the better, where we are willing to discuss something new that perhaps will suit Quebec and ourselves.

**MR. ADY:** Thank you.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** Bob Hawkesworth.

**MR. HAWKESWORTH:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Cheshire, for a thoughtful and thought-provoking presentation this afternoon. You outlined a number of components to a new Canada. I'm just wondering if as a result of the discussions, negotiations that take place over the next year

or so, the one component you talked about, that being a fairly significant decentralization of power to the provinces, not to the regions, were to occur, would you still feel the same way you do about that? You spoke fairly strongly about the importance of giving significant powers to these regions. If as a result of the negotiations we don't end up with regions but maintain provinces, how would you feel in that situation about this fairly significant decentralization of power from the federal government to the provincial level of government?

MR. CHESHIRE: No, I don't believe we could have a successful system as I described by maintaining all the provinces that are here today. Again, it's because of the regional differences several of them have. The way the provinces are cut up, some of their provincial lines cross these regional differences and some of them don't go far enough. I believe the basis for this theory I've put forward – and I know a lot of other people that support it – is because it's of a region. You must look at a region, and you must get that region in the form of people who have similar needs and aspirations.

When I said taking all the power away from Ottawa, perhaps I didn't go quite deeply enough into it. I do believe that besides the three or four things that I consider national and that they should be looking after, between the federal government and the regions or a number of the regions or even in certain cases one region, there could be areas of responsibility given or agreed to with the federal government that would go to them.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Could I just ask one more question? You've tried to think the unthinkable or what we're hoping is the avoidable, and that's the separation of Quebec. But in the event that it does separate, you spoke about a sort of independent western Canada. Do you feel there's some distinctiveness about us in the west as western Canadians that would justify us remaining independent, or would you see the most viable long-term option for western Canada to unite with the United States?

MR. CHESHIRE: Oh, no. I don't think we need to unite with the United States. Western Canada would certainly, in my opinion, be a viable country, and I don't think it would have as many differences as, say, eastern Canada if it were a country, because I believe they have more regional differences amongst themselves than we out west have amongst ourselves.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Okay. Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.  
Yes, Yolande, and then Gary Severtson.

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you very much. You've given us a lot of food for thought. I could probably ask about 20 questions, but I'm limited to two. I'd like to say, Mr. Chairman, that we've heard three great patriots this afternoon, and I think we're all appreciative of that.

My first question would deal with your ideas about one level of taxation and only one and then the money going up and down. Would this include property tax, business tax, every kind of tax in existence, and how could you see that region knowing enough about other levels like school boards and so on and then upwards to decide what is a proper level of taxation? You would see, I'm sure, one region then being much richer than another region. Have you thought of that, how this would work?

2:25

MR. CHESHIRE: Well, I think this is a method of equaling out perhaps, or maybe into this taxation system the transfer of payments would become unnecessary. When you say property taxes, I never really felt that property was a fair taxation method to base very much on. I think the ability to pay has to be a heavy part of the thought in taxation.

MRS. GAGNON: It would be income based then?

MR. CHESHIRE: Income based and maybe partly sales based, but try and get it right down to one. We would have to figure out the one that is the most equal to all. I'm afraid I have to favour the income base.

MRS. GAGNON: Okay. The second thing you mentioned: that you'd just as soon get rid of the Senate, but if we are going to have one, it should be by region. I guess if you talk triple E, the equal part you mean by region, not by province.

MR. CHESHIRE: Yes. Again, it would be by region. Now, when I talk of eliminating the Senate, if my whole proposal were there, it would be where the federal government was pared down so that all we would need is the one House of Commons and, yes, regional level for the triple E Senate.

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Gary Severtson.

MR. SEVERTSON: Yes, Mr. Chairman. If we went with your idea on regional confederations and had four or five regions, depending on what B.C. did, would you say they'd be all equal and with the same rights, the same number of Members of Parliament?

MR. CHESHIRE: No. I don't believe at the federal government it would be possible to have the same number. I do believe that by breaking it into five or six regions we would be a lot closer in population each, except perhaps that one up north, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon. We would be much closer together in the number of people per region, so that alone would equalize what we could do at the Ottawa level. No, I don't believe we could hope to have us all equal in number of members, but very close. I don't think it should be straight based on per population. I'll put it that way.

MR. SEVERTSON: Okay. Then on your last point you said western Canada could form a separate country if Quebec left. In the current round of negotiations, can you see that we should give distinct society or something like special powers to Quebec or stand pat where we are now?

MR. CHESHIRE: No, we should not give distinct society or any other special powers to any region or province or area or people of this nation of ours. We went into Confederation all those years ago, and surely after 133 years we don't need those things. I think we have the ability to develop these special societies or whatever without bothering one another and without enshrining it somewhere so it's an irritating point with all the other areas. No.

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Fred Bradley.

MR. BRADLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I certainly enjoyed your presentation. I believe you took a lot of time to think out your positions, and I'd like to ask you a couple of questions.

If we did not form the regional system which you've suggested and we were left with our current system of provinces and a federal government, do you believe that in terms of language policy that would be best left to the provinces as a responsibility?

MR. CHESHIRE: I think at the federal level it's fine; it should be the two languages. But at the provincial level it has to be left with the provinces, unless you want utter chaos. Because, you know, there are people that are very upset over this, great numbers of them. We've come to the point we are today with them upset. Just try and change that to make one or the other or both compulsory in the province straight across and we really will be breaking up.

MR. BRADLEY: Okay. I have a second question for you. You suggested that the Premier of a province or the Prime Minister should be elected by direct vote of the population. Are you moving away, then, from our current legislative system of the executive branch and the legislative branch together and splitting that, similar to what the United States system is?

MR. CHESHIRE: Yes. That is the portion where I prefer the American system. I believe in having our top people elected by the people. I find our form of government is too argumentative: opposition is supposed to be an opposition and it doesn't matter what the other side says, oppose it; then the government rams through whatever they say because they've got the votes, they pull the string, you know, and the arms go up. I don't like that system. I think the Members of Parliament or members in the Legislature should have some freedom to do what the people back home sent them there for. That is a very important point I believe we must change.

I also believe we need, again as the Americans have, no more than two terms for that Prime Minister or Premier.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Cheshire. I want to just ask you a question about something you didn't refer to but we've been hearing a great deal about. You didn't mention it in your presentation, and if you don't feel comfortable about answering it, don't do so. That is the request by aboriginal groups that there be some form of sovereignty or self-government for aboriginal nations within Canada. Have you thought about that very much? If so, could you tell us what your views on that would be?

MR. CHESHIRE: My view on that is no. I'll be frank. Until about 1960 we were getting along fairly well with the aboriginal people of this country. Somewhere along the way in that multicultural thing and everything else, they got dragged into it and started to take a stand. I believe the Indian and Eskimo people of this country were only the first immigrants to Canada; that's all. They weren't the second or the third or the fourth or the fifth, but I believe they have no greater base than the last person who became a Canadian citizen as an immigrant. Total equality. When you really look at it, I'm a native. I'm not an Indian or an Eskimo or an Inuit, but I'm a native Canadian, and I believe no one should have any rights above another.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Another area which we heard a bit about last week – and you mentioned at the outset of your comments that you've had municipal government experience – we've had some suggestions that municipal governments should also be given constitutional status within the Constitution, not necessarily equal to the federal or provincial governments. How would you feel about putting in special parts of the Constitution to deal with municipal governments, or should it be left to the provinces or regions to set up municipal governments?

MR. CHESHIRE: In the times that I served on municipal council we had our problems with the provincial government.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's still happening.

MR. CHESHIRE: Yeah. But they were surmountable, and both sides had their points. I don't think we've fared that badly. I don't believe we want to clutter up our Constitution any more than is absolutely essential. The document becomes too long, too complicated. Then it's no good for anything.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, thank you very much for your presentation today. As Mr. Hawkesworth said, you're obviously a patriot. We've heard strong views and, I think it's fair to say, somewhat different perspectives from people who presented today, but that's what we're here to listen to. Thank you very much to you and your wife, Ruby, who told me she likes to sit in the back row rather than come to the front of the church. I thank you very much for coming forward today.

2:35

Just before you leave, I wanted to say that while this is the last formal presentation, if there's anyone else in the audience who would like to come forward now and give us some comments, I'd be happy to hear from you. I see a lady coming forward. I hope that's for the purpose of saying a few words.

MRS. SLOAN: It is indeed, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Might we have five minutes?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, coffee break. Do you mind if we take a little coffee break? All right. Let's do that right now, and then we'll get going.

[The committee adjourned from 2:36 p.m. to 2:45 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to reconvene the meeting, if you would, please. I'd ask that my colleagues join me at the table again and that those of you who are in the audience resume your seats.

I'd like to now call on Jean Sloan who's come forward with her presentation. Before she commences her presentation, I'd remind you that if you wish to come forward at the end of this presentation to make your views known either in written form or just verbally – just give us your thoughts – we'd be pleased to hear from anyone else in the audience today.

Jean.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the panel. Incidentally, thank you for the opportunity to have the

chance to give our opinion, something that we thought we might never, ever do.

Anyway, to start, I've got mine in point form. First is bilingualism, biculturalism. This process is not working and neither is multiculturalism. Perhaps it would be better to scrap both and leave it to families to retain their own culture in their own way. The whole process cannot be legislated, and all it does is create controversy and ill will. Respect for minorities must be taught at home, and it is their responsibility.

Pension plans. All pension plans should be portable so that the change in employment does not result in loss of benefits. This could be accomplished by integrating them with the Canada pension plan.

Taxation. Municipal taxes are easy to understand as they're based on property and can stand much as they are. However, income taxes are much more complicated and must be revamped. There must be equal taxation for all according to income. The legislation for large corporations is much too vague, and there are too many loopholes to help them avoid taxation.

Tax incentives. There must be an end to tax incentives to entice corporations into the country. When they get these massive tax breaks, the small amount of employment they provide is not enough to justify the preferential treatment they receive, and it's much too expensive for the rest of Canada to carry.

Governmental reform. One, there must be an end to the use of closure to get unpopular legislation through the House. Two, members must be allowed to vote their conscience without bringing down the government on any one Bill. Three, orders in council must be severely curtailed. We have gone into war that way, and it's not in the best interests of Canada. Four, I do not normally agree with government by referenda. However, there are some instances when it's necessary. Five, a constituent assembly to replace the Senate would go a long way to resolving our present dilemma. Six, both territories must have provincial status. Seven, we need a strong federal government so further powers to the individual provinces would not be acceptable. We do not want Canada balkanized. MPs must adhere to a rigid code of ethics to remove the appearance of conflict of interest. Parliament must be recalled for major decisions affecting the whole of Canada. Patronage appointments must cease, and people must be appointed on merit regardless of party affiliations.

The minimum wage: there must be a more realistic minimum wage under federal jurisdiction for all provinces.

Education. Education standards must be universal, with a Canadawide examination policy to ensure these higher standards. Education must be portable so that any student will have no difficulty moving from province to province at the same level. We must have a Crown corporation school book publishing form. All school books must have a high degree of local content.

Interprovincial trade barriers: there must be free trade between provinces.

The environment. There must be strong new legislation to protect the environment on all fronts. There must be an environmental enforcement agency with the powers of closure to ensure polluting industries, municipalities, or individuals obey these new laws. Hazardous materials must be disposed of adequately. Polluters must pay for the cleanup. Nuclear power must be phased out until such time as the waste they produce can be utilized or disposed of without danger to future generations. Any development must be subject to environmental

impact studies and may not proceed until this is done. Research and development into alternative methods of energy production must be started immediately.

Crown corporations must not be sold to private enterprise when they provide necessary goods or employment.

Immigration: immigration procedures must be speeded up to process the people who have been waiting for their status to be defined.

The judiciary: judges must not be appointed to the Supreme Court to reward party faithful but only on merit.

Free trade. Free trade agreements – that includes, of course, the Mexican one which we're faced with – must be rescinded as they only allow corporations to withdraw their manufacturing or processing plants to lower wage areas. Canada would be better served if we helped other countries to raise their own wage scale. Our marketing boards must be protected as they are the only fair way to serve our producers. Rail line abandonment does not make the best use of our finite resources, and rail transport is a much more cost-efficient way to ship goods.

Defence. We need sufficient protection for our coastline and to ensure our sovereignty in the north. We must have our own icebreaker to remove our dependency on another country. NORAD and NATO are outmoded and no longer should be a priority. There is no way we want to be embroiled in the internal struggles of other countries. Canada must walk its own path without being coerced into support of another country's motives that are suspect. We must regain our reputation as a peacekeeper for war only causes problems for defenceless people. Our membership in the Organization of American States does not mean we slavishly endorse all U.S. activity in the western hemisphere.

The prison system. All female prisoners must be housed as closely as possible to their own area. Prison farms must be reinstated; providing their own food is a far superior therapy to doing nothing. Prisoners must be able to receive any training they desire to reduce the alternative of returning to crime when they're unable to get employment.

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms must be changed to allow necessary questions regarding ability to accomplish certain tasks and to allow work therapy for prisoners at minimum wage.

Quebec must be an equal partner in Confederation without infringing on the rights of other provinces. Quebec must not be allowed to separate with the idea of retaining our monetary policies or currency. Every effort must be made to keep Quebec in Canada without eroding the strength of the federal government.

Aboriginal rights. Land claims must be settled immediately. Education must be within the national standard under their own control. They must be allowed to earn their own livelihood on their own land to remove the stigma of existence on public assistance. Aboriginal people must have access to assistance to establish their own internal structure. They must hire and control their own police forces with access to the RCMP when needed. Aboriginal people must have full equality with all other Canadians. Aboriginal peoples must have full control of their internal affairs to make their own laws and set their own standards within provincial jurisdiction.

I regret, Mr. Chairman, that I did not address social problems, especially medicare, women's rights – which, of course, was part of the reason the Meech Lake accord crapped out – and transfer payments or the organic effort that we need to keep our planet so we can still use it.

Anyway, I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I'm sure there'll be a number of questions.

Pam Barrett.

MS BARRETT: Thanks. The first one is rhetorical and that is: is there an area of public policy that you're not either interested in or informed about?

MRS. SLOAN: Well, interested in anyway. Thank you.

MS BARRETT: Oh, I'd suggest informed as well. Actually the questions I want to ask you relate to pension portability. This is of personal interest to me. I'm not sure it's one that would go into the Constitution. I'm an economist by trade, and believe it or not, that leaves you with a lot of shortcomings because I'm not an actuary, but the subject has been of immense interest to me for a million years. I want to ask you if you've talked to people about this and can articulate a formula whereby you can roll pension contributions into an agency that can invest the money sufficiently well to get a good enough return on it beyond that which, say, Canada pension plan could do, so that you could satisfy both the employer's contributions and the employee's contributions?

2:55

MRS. SLOAN: Well, when you speak about investment, I would think the only place that the money could be invested logically, if it's handled, as I say, attached to the Canada pension, would be something like federal treasury bills.

MS BARRETT: Do you think that there would be much resistance either from the employer's side or the employee's side to any type of system that would grant this portability?

MRS. SLOAN: I think not. It's like everything else, you know. They say sex the first time is rather difficult, but you get used to it.

MS BARRETT: Thanks. I may have some more questions afterwards. Not wanting to get into the next subject, you see.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's known as dodging the bullet.  
Yolande.

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you very much. Item 17, Quebec, you say that, "Every effort must be made to keep Quebec in Canada without eroding the strength of the federal government" and then that they "must be an equal partner in Confederation without infringing on the rights of other provinces." I guess we all know the situation there changes day to day to day, and it looks now as if the separatists are less popular than they were even a month ago and so on. So it's still a moving thing that's changing all the time, but let's say they were to get distinct status at least in the preamble of a constitutional document or something, just to recognize that they are different in some ways. Would you say that infringes on the rights of other provinces? That term "without infringing on the rights of other provinces," I'd like an explanation of. How do they infringe on our rights?

MRS. SLOAN: Well, I guess I look at it sort of through the back door. When the agreement was not really agreed to, there were 44 points, I believe, that were given to Quebec according to Dalton Camp in the last issue of *Saturday Night Magazine*. None of the other provinces have those privileges, and I don't

think they particularly need them. When I think of when we invited Newfoundland to become part of Confederation, we promised them the moon, but we didn't give them anything. When I talk about infringing on the rights of other provinces . . . I don't know. You see, what are those 44 points? I don't know what they are. I see them mentioned, but I don't know exactly what they are. Do you?

MRS. GAGNON: They're in the income tax system, I guess. It was the way in which taxes were shared.

MRS. SLOAN: And they have their own pension plan.

MRS. GAGNON: Yeah.

MRS. SLOAN: But what else? That's not 44. Does anybody know?

MR. CHAIRMAN: There are a vast number of things in the current Constitution about education, educational rights, and so on, but in any event . . .

MRS. GAGNON: But anyway, let's say they got more points. I think each province has 100 points in the income tax system, right? I read the article, too, but you know, I'm not that clear. They got some of them; others maybe didn't ask for them or didn't want them, I don't know. Regardless, how does that infringe on the rest of us?

MRS. SLOAN: Well, I guess it doesn't, if I understand what the points are. When I don't know . . .

MRS. GAGNON: There needs to be clarification.

MRS. SLOAN: Yeah; it's called covering all bases.

MRS. GAGNON: Okay. My second question, just quickly, would deal with the fact about all schoolbooks needing a higher degree of local content. Would you agree also that they need more historical content, because we don't know our story?

MRS. SLOAN: That's exactly what I'm talking about.

MRS. GAGNON: You mean history not just regional.

MRS. SLOAN: Not localized but certainly with that local component in them. They have to be geared to the area that they're for, but they've got to be Canadian books.

MRS. GAGNON: Okay. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ken Rostad.

MR. ROSTAD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On your point five you say that no further powers should go to the individual provinces. What would you do with the split jurisdiction, or do you have an opinion? What would you do with the powers that are joint; such as agriculture and environment, which are not provincial and not federal? Do you have a position on whether one of them should be federal or provincial, or do you think it's fine the way they are?

MRS. SLOAN: There has to be a joint deal, because the federal government is too far away on things, as you mentioned,

like agriculture and the environment. There has to be a local – in fact, it has to be even brought down to the municipal area, because we have to have involvement of all the people. This is the one thing we haven't had to date. I'm afraid that if you give any further federal rights to the provinces, all of a sudden we've got an emasculated federal government, and on the world stage how can we act then?

MR. ROSTAD: Okay; so you don't want any more transferred, but on joint ones you think it should be closest to the local.

MRS. SLOAN: Oh, yeah, absolutely.

MR. ROSTAD: Thank you.

MRS. SLOAN: We need more responsibility, and that goes from the grass roots up, because nobody's been accepting responsibility. We pass the buck.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Jack Ady.

MR. ADY: Thank you. My question moves to your item 4, tax incentives. I know that there's been an arm wrestle across Canada to attract foreign capital into various provinces. What you're advocating is that under the Constitution this would be illegal to do that by any province, any municipality. No one could offer any kind of tax incentive to attract business or investment.

MRS. SLOAN: That's right.

MR. ADY: Okay; I just wanted to be clear on that.

MRS. SLOAN: If I may answer that a little more, Jack. When you offer it, then it becomes a regional thing. It's like a hockey game: it's my side against your side. If you do away with it completely, then no one has it, and everybody's on an equal footing. If people want to indulge in our resource extraction, because that's mostly what we are, if they want to profit by that, then I suggest they pay through the nose.

MR. ADY: Well, it's sort of the reverse of what's happening in the trade war on cereal grains today.

The next question I had is: the constituent assembly that you advocate to replace the Senate, how would you see them being put in place? What would be the process? Would you see them elected, or how many would there be from a province?

MRS. SLOAN: "Constituent" does mean elected; does it not?

MR. ADY: Well, I more or less saw it as coming from a constituency, an area, but if you see it as an elected person, then that was my question.

If I could just squeeze in one more question. Over on item 9, any developments to "be subject to environmental impact studies and may not proceed until this is done." It would seem to me that you'd have to set some criteria for what falls into that category, or we'd have environmental impact assessments on a new service station and frivolous things. Surely you would see some level set there that wouldn't bring in the whole panel to do a very expensive study.

MRS. SLOAN: I wish I could give you a definite answer to that one, Jack. I've mulled it over in my mind many times. The only

trouble is that it's like things that we've done 25 years ago and now we realize they're extremely dangerous; we didn't know it at the time. When I don't know what's going to happen in the future, I left it open-ended strictly for that reason, because I don't really know. I know there has to be some kind of an elasticity in the kind of rules and regulations you have. I would rather err on the side of caution than the other way.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Bob Hawkesworth, please.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We're certainly getting lots of interesting ideas, and you've given us a long list of them this afternoon, Jean. Some have suggested that we can avoid a confrontation or a collision with Quebec if we sort of decentralized a lot of powers to the provincial level of government. I take from your presentation today that you're not advocating a strong decentralization, that you'd like to see quite a strong federal government maintained, in fact, maybe even strengthened. If that's the case, if I'm reading your presentation correctly, do you see any way out of this collision course, or do you see some way for us being able to balance these conflicting pressures and demands within the country? Do you see some way out?

3:05

MRS. SLOAN: Well, referring back to those several articles in the *Saturday Night Magazine*, is it cyclical? I know the Young Turks that are frothing at the bit right now for separatism will grow up and become Conservatives one day too. Maybe we should just do like Solomon: sit back and just take it real cool, and maybe it will go away. What have they got to gain, really, by separating except to say that we're separate? I still don't believe we can possibly allow it to happen, because the maritimes cannot hang out there by themselves.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Is there some gesture that – maybe it's not even required or something even symbolic – where the rest of Canada says to Quebec, "We really do want you to remain a part of what we have here." Maybe you're saying that that's not required, that the country's worked well and let's sort of focus on the positives about how well the country's worked.

MRS. SLOAN: Well, when they get 25 percent of the transfer payments because it's on a nose-count basis, how the blazes can they afford to get along without us, and how can we afford to get along without them? As far as I'm concerned, it's just an economic equation, and the whole thing is ridiculous to even consider.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Fred Bradley.

MR. BRADLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciated your position, and obviously you've taken a lot of time to go through and develop the thoughts that you have. I had one question in the area of education and setting of national standards. In your . . .

MRS. SLOAN: Scary, isn't it?

MR. BRADLEY: Well, in your presentation I just wanted to get some clarification. Do you see this as transferring the current education responsibility from the provinces to the federal

government? Is that the theme, or are you looking at a mechanism whereby provinces would negotiate amongst themselves to set some standards?

MRS. SLOAN: I think we have input from all of the provinces, but I think it has to be a federal situation, because we've got to the stage now . . . Once upon a time Saskatchewan had the highest educational standards in Canada, and they've slipped alarmingly in the last while. I've watched this happen. If we have a standard and if we have the national examination, I think we can catch ourselves before we degenerate any more, because we've got illiterate people – I know; I'm the chairman of Learn and have been for the last 10 years – and we have people who are slipping through the cracks. Their education system is not available to all. It's supposed to be but it's not. Therefore, maybe if it's on a national scale with input locally, it will . . . I don't know. I'm just hoping, I guess, Fred.

MR. BRADLEY: Okay. Well, just a follow-up on that. The federal government currently has the responsibility for education of our native people, and some people would suggest that that hasn't been entirely successful, with them having that jurisdiction there right now. Alberta has got some pretty high standards, I believe, in terms of education. We have the highest percentage of our population with university degrees. Would you support this movement to transfer this education responsibility to the federal government if, in fact, it meant lower standards than what Albertans currently enjoy in terms of education?

MRS. SLOAN: What a horrible thought. No, I certainly couldn't. I don't want lowered standards; I want raised standards. I want education as far as anybody wants to go with it. You know, when we started the medicare situation, part of that theory was that we would be able to help finance a child that wanted to study medicine that couldn't possibly, because of his parents' economic condition, afford to study medicine. Part of what medicare was based on was preventive medicine and that. I want all children in Canada, regardless of race, whether they're immigrants or native, to have the highest degree of education that is humanly possible to have.

MR. BRADLEY: I think we certainly support that direction in terms of all Canadians having as high an education standard as possible, but you know, the other thing one should think about in terms of transferring the responsibility to the federal government is that we believe Alberta does have high standards and we want to bring the rest of the country up to Alberta standards, but does the federal government have the fiscal capacity, in fact, to do that? Currently they seem to be shifting those areas where they have had some responsibility and have initiated programs on a national level which were supposed to be on a 50-50 joint basis. They've been downloading their share of that fiscal responsibility and transferring it to others. I think that's something that has to be thought about in terms of these jurisdictional responsibilities also.

MRS. SLOAN: I don't know. I guess you're talking about when the federal government was supposed to be responsible for aboriginal education, and that has been the biggest farce of all time. In the last little while it's improved considerably, but the physical condition, the education of our local native people, you know, is just appalling up until the last 10 years maybe. You're dead right on that. But I guess – what you would call it, benign neglect, I suppose? I don't know. I guess what I want is more

responsibility and more involvement. These hearings have done some of that, and I want it to last. I want people that live in Canada to damn well be responsible for how Canada operates. I'm sick to death of everybody sitting back and saying, "Yes, but they did that to us." Well, so? You voted them in; that's your problem, isn't it? I want responsibility, and I want it from everybody.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, Jean, as chairman I sometimes get to ask questions that haven't been asked by others. You've raised some very interesting points here. One was on the subject of bilingualism and so on, and you say it's not working. Do you feel that the answer to that would be to give more responsibility to each province to establish the language policies, and I include in that Quebec?

MRS. SLOAN: I think it almost has to be. When we look at what the legislation has done, it's caused so darned much ill will. It's not that the children aren't profiting; the ones that are in French immersion love it, and it's excellent for them. I wish everybody had seven languages, but I don't think you can legislate it. All it does is make people irritated. What I regret . . . My father was of German extraction, and the fact that he did not see to it that I learned that language I figure was highly remiss.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. The next one relates to your point four, is one of very real concern, and that's the question of tax incentives to entice corporations into the country. Now, I'm not sure whether I'm on the right point here or not, but in the Constitution now there are provisions made that would permit regional development programs whereby certain parts of the country that are not as well developed as others could have programs designed to assist them to upgrade. Newfoundland, Cape Breton, and Nova Scotia, for example.

MRS. SLOAN: Right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: In many discussions I've had with Clyde Wells, the Premier of Newfoundland, he has claimed that while those programs were well intentioned at the outset, they ultimately failed because every other part of Canada, including the prosperous areas, also came to demand the same kind of assistance. Were you talking about that type of program there, or were you talking about something else?

MRS. SLOAN: I was talking about the idea that when this city gets in conflict with North Battleford or somebody else and we offer X company property or tax-free status, whatever, for a certain period of time, then we get to the provinces, and they do the same thing. And we get to the federal government, and they do the same thing to bring them in. I do not think it's legitimate.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. It's pretty complex because you get into that bidding war aspect of things, and I know what that's like. Would you agree that we should maintain the opportunity for the federal government, in consultation with the provinces, to design some programs which would assist regions which are not experiencing economic growth?

MRS. SLOAN: It's an excellent idea, and it would be wonderful if you didn't have to be a Conservative Party member to benefit from it. I think that always helps such a lot.

[The committee adjourned at 3:18 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, you've just made a little bit of a partisan statement there.

MRS. SLOAN: Right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But I'm talking about programs that have gone back over decades, both federal and Liberal administrations at the federal level, about the subject of trying to develop regional development programs. I've specifically mentioned Newfoundland, Cape Breton in Nova Scotia, and those programs were brought in by Liberal and/or Conservative parties. That's quite a different thing than the point you just made.

MRS. SLOAN: I know that I've heard about these regional development things, especially as you mentioned in the maritimes, and I have yet to see a report on any of them. I guess it was the fishing industry and the mining industry, perhaps, that benefited. I don't know. As I say, the only Newfoundlander I ever got the chance to talk at any great length was Des Walsh, and he was so rabidly anti-Canada that we almost had to keep him under control, I'll tell you, because of the promises that were made to Newfoundland that were never carried out. So maybe Cape Breton and Newfoundland and a few other areas did get some types of concessions, but I haven't seen anything personally to show me what they got.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Well, there are lots of reports on what happened, but as Premier Wells now says, they failed because as soon as they went into effect, Ontario demanded the same type of program, and it just got lost in the . . .

MRS. SLOAN: Yeah. I'm afraid we suffer from opportunism a lot.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Just one more question that I have, and it's about aboriginal rights. You say aboriginal people must have full equality with other Canadians. Would that include the requirement that they also pay taxes the same way that the rest of Canadians do?

MRS. SLOAN: Why not? If they have their land settled, if they have their own affairs in order, they pay the way we pay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MRS. SLOAN: Let's make them full citizens.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you very much.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there anyone from the audience who wishes to now come forward and make a verbal presentation? If not, I want to thank those of you who made your presentations today and those of you who came to listen. We are going to adjourn now until this evening, and we reconvene at 7 p.m. I invite those of you who were here to listen to this morning's presentations to come back this evening and look forward to the presentations which we have on our list for this evening.

Thank you very much.