

7 p.m.

Tuesday, May 28, 1991

[Chairman: Mr. Horsman]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. It's now 7 o'clock. We shall reconvene the panel. For those of you who weren't here in the afternoon, this is one of two panels of the select special committee of the Alberta Legislative Assembly which are in the process of touring the province to seek out the views of Albertans on the future of Alberta in a new Canada. I'm Jim Horsman. I'm the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Medicine Hat, and I'm the chairman of the committee. I'll ask my colleagues to briefly introduce themselves.

MRS. GAGNON: I'm Yolande Gagnon, the MLA for Calgary-McKnight.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Bob Hawkesworth, MLA for Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. ADY: Jack Ady, MLA for Cardston.

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.

Welcome to those who aren't from here, and those who are, thanks for coming out.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This afternoon on my left is Garry Pocock, who is the secretary and the timekeeper. We were able to stretch out the afternoon somewhat and accommodate more people than had been anticipated. However, we don't have that same luxury this evening, and therefore I would ask that the presenters stick very closely to their 15-minute allotment. At the end of 10 minutes the bell will ring, and that will be your notice that if you wish to wrap up, you may do so or keep going. We'll let you have another five minutes, but if you take that full five minutes, then we'll preclude the opportunity of questions from panel members. We've had a very full day here in Camrose to date. We look forward to your comments and views this evening.

I would ask now for the presenters on behalf of the Camrose separate school district: Stan Grywalski, Wilf Backhaus, and Lawrence Dufresne.

MR. DUFRESNE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm Lawrence Dufresne. I'm the chairman of the Camrose separate school district. On my left is our superintendent of schools, Dr. Grywalski, and on my right is one of our trustees Dr. Backhaus.

Just to give you a brief overview of the district, our district operates within the city of Camrose, operates two schools, educates 430 children from ECS to grade 9. Some of the children that we educate come from outside of the city of Camrose, approximately 80 or 90 of them.

Our purpose this evening is simply to ask and encourage the provincial government to speak strongly in favour of the provisions of section 93 of the BNA Act, as confirmed by chapter 29 of the ordinances and section 17 of the Alberta Act, which grants the rights, powers, and privileges currently enjoyed

by separate Catholic school districts in the province. Using our district as an example and looking to its mission statement, we can quickly see the benefits of protecting the rights, powers, and privileges currently enjoyed. To be specific, our district along with other separate Catholic districts in this province provides a learning environment where children can grow in body, mind, and spirit; provides a learning environment where children, with parents and staff, can learn about and celebrate the richness of the Catholic faith; and calls the children to serve the world in a positive and hopeful manner. In other words, our district is committed to Alberta children and to their formation as well-rounded and caring citizens.

It is important that institutions such as ours be allowed to continue their mission in a framework that offers security and permanency. We are aware that others have approached certain national leaders soliciting their support in favour of removing these rights, powers, and privileges from the Canadian Constitution. Therefore, we are concerned. However, we are also aware that this province appreciates the valuable and continuing service Catholic schools have provided Alberta children during the history of this province. We are therefore confident of its support in the upcoming constitutional debate and reform.

That is the end of my formal presentation. We are prepared for questions if the committee has any. We also have a handout that we will be distributing to the members in a few minutes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. Do either of your colleagues wish to add anything? All right. Are there questions?

Yes, Yolande Gagnon.

MRS. GAGNON: We heard a presentation, I believe it was on Saturday, from the Edmonton Catholic school board Chair. He basically was making the same request: that the rights and privileges enjoyed through the BNA Act be continued. Other than some funding problems in some jurisdictions where the enrollments have declined, are there any other ways in which you see separate schools being threatened in this province? From my experience that is the only threat: a very low enrollment, restricted boundaries, therefore the school may be closed and the rights enjoyed in that area would be diminished. Is there anything else?

MR. DUFRESNE: Dr. Backhaus wishes to make a comment, so I'll let him.

DR. BACKHAUS: Yeah, I think there are some serious concerns coming up. There are recent decisions out of Ontario which impact on the right of the public school to impose any morality whatsoever, at least any morality that's clearly seen to be sectarian or more than just motherhood and apple pie. The Catholic school systems in Alberta have enjoyed constitutional protection of the sort that we can compel certain moral standards of our students and our teachers. This has been tested out in the courts. We're concerned that any diminution of those rights would affect our ability to discipline and therefore run the school system consistent with Catholic values.

MRS. GAGNON: Okay. A supplementary. I believe that what you're talking about is the fact that the separate school system has a right to hire Catholic teachers or Protestant teachers in the case of Glen Avon in St. Paul. They have that right because that underlies their philosophy. But are you concerned then that others would say, "We have to be freed up from this kind of

possibility"; if that's the only school system in a town or a village, for instance, that they would not want to be subject to that kind of ruling? Is that the concern?

DR. BACKHAUS: Well, that's the concern that's being expressed, for example, in the county of Lacombe, where certain persons who are not Christians are concerned that a public school system is enforcing Christian values on them. I think that the way the law is going now, the people who are not Christians have a right to be concerned that the public schools are expressing Christian values, whereas as Catholics we have a right now to impose our values within our school system. There is no more fundamental right, such as the Charter of Rights, which could override that, and that's been tested in the courts in Alberta.

MRS. GAGNON: But how is that being threatened here in Alberta? That's my point.

DR. BACKHAUS: Oh, it's not being threatened at all. The question is: if section 93, for example, and the equivalent sections in the Alberta Act are removed, that would be threatened. In other words, it would then put it under the subjugation of the Charter of Rights, which requires us to eliminate value from the curriculum essentially.

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.
Bob Hawkesworth.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: There have been some Albertans at our hearings who have made the case that under a new Constitution everyone should be treated the same: equality for everyone, no special status for any group or collective group of individuals. What I hear you saying this evening is that at the present time our Constitution recognizes diversity in some regards and protects minorities, especially in the case of our Catholic separate school system, and that it's a value we've traditionally respected in our Constitution and one we should continue to respect. Would that be a fair summary of the point you're here to make tonight?

MR. DUFRESNE: Yes. Our experience is that a school district that supports a value base that's recognized in the community as being worth the support has been a very good way of assisting the students to become good citizens, caring citizens. So we're speaking from that experience, and that's why we want to retain that privilege and those rights.

MR. CHAIRMAN: As we've gone along, we have been hearing concern about the lack of minimum standards across Canada and the fact that such lack of minimum standards inhibits the ability of students to move freely from one province to another. The suggestion is that in order to overcome that problem, the federal government should gain powers with respect to education that they do not now have under section 93. What is your view of that?

7:10

MR. DUFRESNE: I wonder if I could pass that question to my superintendent.

DR. GRYWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, you raise a very, very valid point in terms of standards and a concern for standards. My reaction to this would be that basically I think the provinces are handling education in a very acceptable manner. To simply say that you're going to have a national office of education doesn't necessarily mean that all of a sudden you're going to get an improved standard. When you start comparing the curricula at the present time – and they do vary from province to province – I think you will find that basically there are variations, and I would hope that we would continue these variations in terms of curricula. I think provinces should have the right to do that.

While one might say that one should have common exams or common denominators in terms of examinations, I also believe that our students are performing extremely well on the Alberta scene. I would just venture to say that you cannot examine everything. To attach a percentage in terms of a standard isn't necessarily a wise thing at all, at the same time. Now, we've got to be competitive, I know, in relation to the Pacific Rim countries and in terms of, let's say, the western countries. At the same time, I think that we've got to produce citizens that have more than just simply the academic background in relation to what we anticipate for the year 2000 and beyond.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'll just ask a supplementary. In the most recent federal throne speech the federal government made a case for greater federal government involvement in education by stating that four out of 10 Canadians are functionally illiterate. Are you familiar with those sorts of statistics?

DR. GRYWALSKI: Well, you can make statistics, Mr. Horsman, do whatever you wish. Until you have a solid comparative base, I'm not sure that you're comparing apples to apples, oranges to oranges throughout the various provinces.

Now, basically what is meant by illiteracy? At what level are you establishing this? I haven't seen that. Is it at the grade 9 level? Is it at the grade 10 level? Is it at grade 8? What is the level of illiteracy?

The other thing that you must remember is simply: how much more additional moneys and efforts are you going to have to put out in order to obtain 100 percent literacy? I'm not totally confident, regardless of the resources and the moneys that we put out, that we're going to have everybody literate to begin with.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I'm illiterate in computer technology, I know that much. Well, thank you very much.

Are there any further questions that anyone would like to pose? Anything you'd like to add before you conclude?

DR. BACKHAUS: I want to add a few points to that comment about national education standards. One of the problems with the Constitution is that Canada grew by leaps and bounds in a very short period of time, and they didn't change the BNA Act. As a result of that, we have a Constitution which is designed for the Saint Lawrence River valley stretching across the continent.

At one point it made sense for local jurisdictions to have education under their control, because the local jurisdictions were all connected by river. When they added B.C. and Manitoba, they should have rethought everything, including the Senate and that sort of thing. The fact that we haven't really paid attention to the historical changes that have happened in Canada and have assumed that the constitutional document that was cobbled together in 1867 will still do the job is why we've got problems now. We haven't been sensitive to the fact of the

great distances that Canada has. We are at Russian distances just about. You know, we have one of the largest countries in the world with hardly any people in it, yet we're trying to use a Constitution which was developed for a very small number of people in a very small space relative to the rest of the country now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, that's what we're struggling with, I think, as this select committee, as well as the ones in other provinces and with the federal government.

Well, thank you very much, gentlemen, for your eloquent remarks. Could I just get a clarification here? In terms of percentage of students in the schools in Camrose, what percentage do you educate?

DR. BACKHAUS: About 30.

MR. DUFRESNE: No, it would be less than that. It would be more like 20 percent.

MR. CHAIRMAN: About 20 percent of the students in the city of Camrose?

MR. DUFRESNE: That's correct.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Well, thank you very much for participation.

MR. DUFRESNE: Do I leave this at the back?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, if you give it to the secretary, he will make sure that we all get copies.

In addition, I should tell those of you who intend to make a presentation that if you have copies of your presentation, please give them to our secretary. He will distribute them to us. In addition, we will, of course, make these available to the other panel, which is now doing exactly what we're doing, but they're doing it in Grande Prairie. So we're covering a good chunk of the province today.

Thank you very much, all of you gentlemen.
Mike Lohner.

MR. LOHNER: Good evening. I'd like to thank the members of the select special committee for allowing me to make a presentation here this evening. I am pleased that the members of the Legislative Assembly of our province have decided to consult Albertans for direction as we move into the next round of constitutional negotiations, negotiations that will prove challenging but above all fundamentally important to the unity and future of Canada as we know it. I am glad that the committee is here in Camrose to hear our views and that our MLA is playing such an active role in this process. Clearly public involvement such as this is a step in the right direction, towards successful constitutional reform.

I chose to attend this evening for several reasons. I have been a Canadian and an Albertan all my life. As a 19-year-old university student it is my hope that my generation and those that follow will continue to have the choice that I value foremost: the freedom to live in Alberta or anywhere else in a Canada that stretches from sea to sea to sea and is united. I am not a political scientist, an economist, a constitutional lawyer, or an elected official. However, I have noticed trends and directions emerging as I read or hear Canadians debate our future. Some of these concern me, particularly those being

alluded to by many prominent politicians today. I felt it important to voice my concerns and echo alternatives that I believe will allow Canada to remain strongly united.

I am deeply concerned with the negativism and pessimism that is surrounding us in the constitutional reform debate today. It is great that so many people are discussing our current crisis. However, the vast majority of conversations, politicians' speeches, or media reports are focusing on what is wrong with Canada. I've heard it declared often that the first step to forging a new constitutional agreement or any agreement is for all parties to have the will to succeed. We must have a desire to keep Canada united. I believe that deep down all parties involved have that desire, as does everyone that is here tonight; that is why we came. Unfortunately this is not what comes across. All the negativeness could lead more people to question if Canada is worth saving.

We must express the many good things about Canada and show people that our country is worth saving. Canadians must keep in mind that Canada is more than a collection of Acts and conventions making up a Constitution. Canada is our people, our traditions, our freedoms, and our symbols. Canada is the vast prairie, the majestic mountains, our small-time heroes, and even our bitter cold winters. Finally, Canada is the institutions that facilitate and protect what we cherish. Canadians must remember that it is our similarities and our differences which hold Canada together, not documents which only lawyers write and courts understand. The Alberta government as well as all Albertans and members of the media must spread the good news about Canada and show that it is worth saving, because only when that attitude exists will we be able to reach a solution.

My second major concern lies with what appears to be a growing consensus that the provinces should gain greatly increased powers at the expense of the federal government. I could not disagree more. I have no problem with and encourage the evaluation and reorganization of our federal/provincial division of powers. However, our form of federalism has to a large extent, give or take a few errors, worked well for Canada. As a Canadian I value having national standards and having relatively equitable opportunities nationwide. Obviously, there are responsibilities that would function better if decentralized, as there are responsibilities which would function better if centralized.

The federal government is in a weak bargaining position in this round of Constitutional negotiations as a result of the failure of the Meech Lake accord. It bothers me to see the agenda-setting provinces in a needless power grab from vulnerable Ottawa. Many services the provinces provide currently are paid for by the federal government by means of transfer payments even in the have provinces such as Alberta and Ontario. Aside from money received in equalization payments, conditional grants, or tied aid, provinces should be forced to collect money and pay for the services they provide. Every government has to be accountable for the money that they spend. It serves for political benefit for the provinces to gain additional power and to spend money, especially if the federal government is footing the bill. The Alberta government and this committee must look carefully in the national sense towards the redistribution of power, be a national voice of reason, and not participate in a grab of control from the federal government for only political gain, because this will not create Canadian unity.

7:20

Now, how about the equalization payments between the provinces? The Alberta in a New Canada discussion paper

contains a graph showing that Albertans receive the least amount of services or money back for the taxes that they pay. Always it is the well-off provinces who complain about the net outflow of tax dollars. However, Alberta has not always had the most healthy economy in Canada nor will it forever. Would it be more unifying to go away from that equalization that Canada stands for and have a Third World province emerge in Canada? Would Alberta have to close its doors to immigrants from a less well-off province? More political autonomy will reduce Canada's sense of nationhood in my opinion and increase regional disparity. Once again, this will not unify Canada.

These are my major concerns, and I'll now focus briefly on a few issues expressing my opinion.

The first is bilingualism. Bilingualism in Canada has not failed us. We are not any worse off for having tried it. The system, however, is not working as it had been envisioned. From here I believe we have two options, both equally desirable to me. First, we could reduce bilingualism requirements to only certain national programs and services. With limitations official bilingualism would be less expensive, more efficient, and more acceptable to Canadians. Secondly, we could choose complete bilingualism. This can only be accomplished by second-language immersion in all schools. This would be expensive but would show extensive and rapid results. As I said before, I have no preference to either option, and I could live with both.

The next issue is over the distinct society or special status idea that we had trouble with during the Meech Lake accord debate. I've been fortunate to have the opportunity to travel to several national conferences and courses in my youth, and I've met many people my age from every different province. What stands out most in my mind was how unique everybody was. It didn't bother me that everyone had an accent. Rather, it made me realize that maybe I had one. A third of the representatives being Francophone didn't bother me as well. Rather, it made me sorry that I was not bilingual. Returning home after these encounters made me proud to be Canadian because of our similarities and, more importantly, because of our differences and our uniqueness. Provinces are not distinct. It is the people in the communities, the cultures, as well as ethnic and linguistic groups all across Canada who are very distinct.

Thirdly, Senate reform. I believe triple E Senate reform is important to our parliamentary system. However, complete parliamentary reform must be considered. Many Canadians feel that the party system is failing them, and in the current system I have to agree. A triple E Senate composed of political parties I doubt would solve that problem. We must look at issues such as relaxed party discipline, more representative government, and possibly a form of even proportional representation to include minority interests in government, as well as Senate reform. I do not believe in government by referendum or by recall, because unity comes from a government for a national sense, not from rule of the majority.

Fourthly, aboriginal affairs. Our native people have been neglected and continue to be forgotten. It should not take a situation like Oka to hear their concerns. Self-government of some form must follow immediate negotiation and settlement of land claim disputes. I am not greatly in favour of separate nation or separate provincial status. However, I do believe that the native people should not be controlled by a single department of Indian affairs. The governments have made too many mistakes. It is time for natives to have the opportunity to make these mistakes for themselves, to learn from mistakes, and to make right decisions as any other municipal government or Canadian citizen would have the right to do.

So how do we now arrive at a constitutional agreement? The first step, in my opinion, is massive public involvement, which is in process now. I believe that the federal government, upon direction of the parliamentary committees that are in place now and consultation with the Premiers and territorial leaders, should propose a constitutional amendment as a suggestion only, fully open for revision. This is when the debate should take place.

Next, the federal government should meet with representatives of concerned groups such as labour, women's groups, aboriginal peoples, youth groups, and so on to solidify the agreement as it pertains to them. I guess this is a form of constituent assembly but with guaranteed representatives elected from certain groups as well as the general public.

Finally, the government should again meet with the Premiers and territorial government leaders with regards to division of powers and final approval using the existing amending formula. Parliament and the provinces should be given sufficient but limited time to pass this proposal. Maybe this is not feasible, but its important elements are that it should not only involve first ministers and that a referendum again would not be acceptable in the spirit of a national unity perspective.

To close, I would like to appeal to all Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to throw political differences aside and quests for advancement aside as well in deciding a solution to our crisis. More importantly, the Alberta position should not originate from within the Premier's office, within cabinet, caucus, or the House, but from the findings of this committee. Above all, Alberta must maintain the will and desire to keep Canada united rather than untied and should remain flexible at the national bargaining table. Canada must remain more important than solely the wishes of Alberta.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Michael. Questions or comments?

Yes, Bob Hawkesworth.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: I would like to first of all thank you for your thorough and particularly well-presented presentation. I just think you might have clarified, or maybe I could have you clarify, this distinct status or special status. You said that provinces were not distinct; people were. Is there some way that the Constitution could recognize that, especially in terms of the situation in Quebec? How do you see recognizing it in the Constitution without sort of naming Quebec as a province and using the provincial label for that definition?

MR. LOHNER: Well, Mr. Hawkesworth, unfortunately, I don't have an answer for that one. I don't mean by that that we should recognize, as was once proposed in the Meech Lake debate, that everybody is a distinct society. I don't mean that, but I'm cautioning against the singling out of provinces because it isn't provinces, as I said, that make Canadians unique. It's their areas, their regions, and their different ethnic backgrounds. I don't have a simple answer for that.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: By the way, you were speaking from a prepared text. Is there any way we could get a copy of that?

MR. LOHNER: I have an additional copy, if you'd like to have it.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: I'd really appreciate it. I really appreciate the thought you've put into this.

The second question I'd like to ask you about: the use of a referendum would not be useful for national unity. We've heard quite a number – some Albertans anyway – at these hearings urge us to submit whatever is developed to the people of Canada in a national vote one way or another and use that as a way of legitimizing the constitutional amendment. Could you maybe expand a bit on that? Why would it not be useful for national unity, and why use the existing amending formula?

MR. LOHNER: Okay. Well, the province of Alberta is not a very populated province. It's not the most populated province in Canada. We are not a majority by any standpoint. The balance of the population of Canada lies in central Canada, in Ontario and Quebec. I could see an important province like Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Alberta or any of the smaller population provinces being ignored in a national referendum. This would create more tension I think. The existing amending formula allows you to keep the concerns of the majority with 50 percent of the population required but allows you to not have Quebec or Ontario both left out. It also doesn't give a veto to any particular province which is not equal; it's more than equal to each province. It gives a province a stranglehold on constitutional negotiations.

7:30

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Pam, did you have a question?

MS BARRETT: Yeah; actually, following on Bob's. By the way, Mike, I'm not sure that people in the back can hear you. You might want to get a little closer to your microphone again.

The negotiations with Quebec can involve very specific questions such as distinct society, which is something that Bob raised a little while ago, and you said, "Well, you know, we're all distinct," and I think you make a good case. But let me ask you the tougher question. You just concluded by saying we need to stay flexible at the bargaining table, right? If you're at the negotiating table and someone says to you, "Quebec sees itself as a distinctive, collective society" – now, I've put "collective" in because that is part of the concept that the French will use – are you going to say no to that at all costs?

MR. LOHNER: No, absolutely not. I believe that you have to say . . . Once again, I did conclude with the fact that we have to be flexible. If it means that we have to acknowledge a distinct society for Quebec alone, then that's what we have to do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Michael, you've done a good job, and we'll circulate your presentation to others. Just one question. You say you do not want to see any of the federal government's responsibilities transferred to the provinces. Do you see any cause for any provincial responsibilities to be transferred to the federal government?

MR. LOHNER: Well, just to correct you, I didn't say that none should be transferred to the provinces. I'm not going to get into them, but I believe there are some . . . They have to be looked at again. There are some provincial powers that I feel would be better held under federal responsibilities, and there are lots of federal responsibilities that would probably be better divided and better handled under provincial or even municipal responsibilities.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But you think those things should all be up for discussion?

MR. LOHNER: I think they should be, but I don't think we should be looking at something like the Allaire report, where it looks like the federal government is going to have no control whatsoever. They should be up for discussion but within reason, keeping in the national context all the time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Michael.
Ron Williams.

MR. WILLIAMS: I wish to thank this committee for the opportunity to appear and present my ideas. This is democracy in action when an ordinary person can present ideas and be listened to, so I thank you for the opportunity.

The Constitution of a nation is of course of extreme importance and must be taken very seriously. Since it is the basis of a nation's way of life as well as of its government, it must be permanent. As Canada again looks at its Constitution, we must be very clear that whatever we enact at this time is going to be permanent. If Canada is to reach its potential, it must be stable, and it cannot be a stable, democratic nation if we are continuously in a state of constitutional crisis with one section of the country threatening that if it doesn't get its own way in constitutional matters, it will leave the federation. We must stop questioning the basic premises of our nation and accept and work within those premises. That doesn't mean we should be a nation frozen in time, but it does mean we should stop projecting to the world an impression of instability caused by our constant questioning. There is something wrong if after 124 years of nationhood we have not yet come to an understanding on a permanent foundation upon which our Constitution can be built. We must do so, and then we must allow the system to work and stop questioning the very existence of our nation.

We have a system that works and has worked. Our system has established a nation across half a continent. It has led us through two world wars, the economic collapse of the Great Depression, and established a fine record in foreign affairs. So it does work. It would be uncalled for to scrap that system for some untried, theoretical one. Political science abounds with theoretical models of ideal systems, but political systems must evolve to fit the nations they serve. Few if any of the constitutional systems which work well in the world today would be recreated in their present form if logical theories were used as the only guide. But they do work, whereas many very fine constitutions based on the finest of theories have failed because they did not fit the system of the nation that they were to serve. We can modify our system, but we must not discard it for something that is untried.

When we judge by media reports, poll results, presentations to the Spicer commission, and similar sources, we get an impression that the Canadian people have a great deal of distrust for their political leaders. I'm sure the members of this committee are exempt. The answer to that is to replace the leaders, not the system. Devices like referendums, voter-initiated legislation, recall of political figures, and constituent assemblies all sound good. But is the United States, which has, at least at the state level, those things, better governed than is Canada? I suppose that's debatable, but I certainly don't feel that the United States is such a great example of good government that we should rush to copy its system. Our historical experience has created our system, and to destroy it in a search for utopia would be a disaster.

A nation needs symbols for unity and identity. We need various things, both concrete and abstract, to make us feel part of our nation. We must have a sense of identity, but that can't be forced by giving us theoretical ideas by the intelligentsia. The one institution that does separate Canada from the United States and the rest of North America is the monarchy. The monarchy is a very powerful symbol of unity for this or any other nation because it raises loyalty beyond politics. The monarch is visible; the abstract notion of nation isn't. It is unfortunate that the institution of the monarchy has been the victim of an insidious campaign by political leaders who have tried to buy the votes of Quebec nationalists by undermining and downgrading that institution.

Ideas become accepted if repeated enough, and politicians, media people, and misguided nationalists have repeated clichés which are accepted as fact when clearly they are not. One example of this is the statement to the people of Quebec that the monarchy represents British oppression. It should represent the fair and generous way in which a conquered people were treated and thus be the symbol of our nation and of our ideals. In any new Canada the monarchy must not only be maintained but strengthened. It must not be the victim of underhanded attacks such as the recent action in Ontario of taking all reference to Her Majesty out of the oaths of policemen while pretending that no change was made. The actions of the Trudeau government in downgrading the role of the monarch as head of state in diplomatic relations should be reversed. The Queen is and must remain our head of state.

To gain full benefit from the monarchical system, the Queen and her representative, the Governor General, must be removed from politics. It is almost a disgrace that the highest office in the land is held by a worn-out, defeated politician. The Governor General, as Her Majesty's representative, should be chosen by Her Majesty without advice from the Prime Minister. If the Queen wished, she could be given a list of names. Also, this would mean that members of the royal family could be appointed, thus ensuring a complete removal of the office from party politics. This, of course, was the case earlier in our history, until the retirement of the Earl of Athlone, Queen Mary's brother, in 1946.

A strengthened nation means a Canadian identity, not a hyphenated one. There's no desire to interfere with a person's respect for their ethnic background, but a citizen's primary identity must be with Canada. There's no place for government funding to encourage diversity. If any group wishes to preserve its language or other aspects of its culture, that is an individual choice, not one to be paid for by all of the taxpayers. Canadian government, history, and ideals should be well and clearly taught in our schools and to all aspirants for citizenship. A new Canada must be a nation with a strong sense of identity. When that is established, we can proceed to discuss specifics of our Constitution. I would like to mention three: division of powers, federal institution, and language rights, but I'll probably run out of time. I could go on for hours.

7:40

The key to a federal nation is the division of powers between federal and provincial governments. This division must be clear to avoid as far as possible expensive duplication of administration and long legal battles to fix the limits of each jurisdiction. The federal government should have control of only those areas where a national standard is required for a nation. This would mean an increase of federal power in some areas and less in others. Each area of government should be examined to

determine if a national standard is needed. Example: is it necessary that all judges of superior courts be patronage appointments of the central government? People feel helpless to influence decisions at the federal level, so we should be careful not to give the federal government control of items which could be locally dealt with.

The federal government must have sufficient taxing authority to raise transfer payments to provinces with less resources so that public services can meet minimum standards, but these standards should not be a backdoor means of extending federal control into areas of provincial jurisdictions. We must not be afraid of differences in health or education. There's no indication that federal politicians or bureaucrats are more concerned about health or education standards than our provincial ones. However, the federal government must have control of those environmental matters which affect more than one province, such as rivers flowing into more than one province – not Buffalo Lake – and sufficient authority to see that there's a free flow of trade between provinces. It would certainly be the height of irony if we arrive at a situation where it is freer to trade with a foreign nation than with another province.

I'll leave the other two since I seem to be getting near the end of my time. I thank you very much for your attention and this opportunity. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Williams. You've given a great deal of thought to your presentation.

Yolande Gagnon.

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you. Earlier on you mentioned that a Constitution must be based on basic premises. I would like you to tell us what those are. Secondly, you mentioned that there was too much instability and we seem to be in continuous crisis. At the same time, though, you did say that the Constitution was a dynamic thing that evolves over time. Could you rationalize those two thoughts, please?

MR. WILLIAMS: Well, as I said, we can certainly adjust the system, but right now we are questioning whether the country should continue to exist, and we have been for the last many years. Meech Lake was supposed to make Quebec feel part of the Constitution, but in '80 or '82 when the Constitution was patriated we were again at a state of crisis with, you know, one province refusing to join, and we were having delegations go to the British Parliament asking that they interfere in a Canadian situation. So I feel we could avoid that kind of questioning, as I say, the basic existence of the nation while we could still very well argue about whether education should be a provincial matter or a federal matter, because I don't think that is going to upset the existence of the country if it's transferred to the other level of government. But whether one province decides to leave the federation certainly is an upsetting of the whole structure.

MRS. GAGNON: What about the basic premises that this country lives by? How would you describe those basic premises?

MR. WILLIAMS: I would like a country in which there's equality amongst all people, special privileges for none, a country that is equal, where the people are equal in every respect, a country based on the democratic principles, which of course takes in virtually everything, doesn't it? That ensures individual rights and so on.

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Williams. Any other questions or comments?

Pam Barrett.

MS BARRETT: Thank you. You said the dissatisfaction with the system indicates – the political system we're talking about now; this is not constitutional, I suppose – a need to change the leaders not the system, and the latter applied, I suppose, to referenda and initiatives. We keep hearing that people want a more direct role in decision-making aside from referenda and initiatives, the American solution to this, which as you say has not worked very well. Can you think of any other ways that would involve people more in the decision-making process?

MR. WILLIAMS: I think a process like this committee is a very good one. I think there just has to be an openness and there has to be trust, but for some reason – I suppose many reasons – it seems that that element of trust just isn't there right now. But I think it can be built again by political leaders appearing to listen and dealing with people's concerns. It has to get across to people, of course, that listening does not mean doing whatever is requested. This must be gotten across, again just by openness and sincerity amongst the political leaders.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Williams. Well, you know, you're quite right on the last point, because we have been listening now for four days and we've heard everything from the notion, on one hand, that the west should separate and become an independent country to one, on the other hand, which says that all powers should be transferred to the federal government and that the provinces should be rendered null and void, in effect. So those really do represent the outer edges, I think, of our experience. Clearly we cannot do both. What we are trying to do, obviously, is find the broad middle ground. I think that is a challenge for all of us, and I want to thank you for your thoughtful presentation.

Just one other comment. You mentioned something we've heard mentioned several times, I think it's fair to say, and that is that we don't teach our history satisfactorily or sufficiently in our schools, and I think perhaps some of your concerns about the understanding of the nature of Canada may flow from that very fact.

MR. WILLIAMS: Yes, and I think in that regard I speak from experience. I have just retired after spending 34 years as a school administrator, and this lack of Canadian studies, lack of Canadian history, government, political science in our school curriculum has appalled me for many, many years.

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

MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Congratulations on your retirement. You're obviously not going to quit thinking.

MRS. GAGNON: Go and work as a consultant at Alberta Ed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Wade Cummings, please.

MR. CUMMINGS: I'd like to thank this committee for the opportunity to express my views on constitutional reform. The economic ramifications of Quebec separating, or for that matter any province separating, are severe. We as a society would end

up going backward. I would like to read two quotes from two of Canada's leading bankers. The first quote:

Disunity is not a cost free option. A united Canada in the year 2,000 would be nearly 30 million people strong, with 15 million working Canadians, an average income of \$25,000, and a national output closing in on \$1 trillion dollars. In a divided Canada, all those numbers would shrink significantly.

That quote was from Allan Taylor, chairman and CEO of the Royal Bank of Canada.

The second quote:

Each region of a divided Canada would assume its own huge debt burden. All levels of government in Canada already pay a substantial interest rate premium. This drives up the cost of capital for domestic businesses which, in turn, hinders job formation and impairs competitiveness. In a fractured Canada, the situation would be worse. All regions would obviously have narrower economic bases. This would leave them subject to wider swings in the economic cycle and entail, as a matter of course, still higher risk premiums.

I cannot envision any re-distribution of our public debt that would not significantly diminish Canada's attractiveness to the investors, both domestic and foreign, who are financing that debt.

And there would be additional handicaps. Conspicuous among them, in all probability, would be further restrictions on the free movement of labor, capital and goods. Furthermore, in a dismantled Canada, no order of government would have room to increase taxation to any degree.

When you combine the available facts with common sense, the picture you get of a divided Canada is one of higher interest rates, narrow economic bases, mounting government deficits.

That was a quote from Matthew Barrett, the chairman and chief executive officer of the Bank of Montreal. Economically we need each province, as each province is essential to the economic makeup of Canada.

7:50

I am first and foremost a Canadian. For the longest time I've struggled with exactly what is a Canadian: how do you define what a Canadian is? I was experiencing the identity crisis that so many Canadians do, and then I realized that being a Canadian is just that. We are a country comprised of several separate identities, yet each identity is essential to the whole makeup of Canada. We have something very special going here. Canada would not be Canada if we lost any of those identities. I feel we have an example to set to the rest of the world. Canada is a place where people broach their cultural differences in order to live in perhaps one of the freest and most affluent nations in the world.

Our tolerance for our differences is what makes us unique. I feel that in that tolerance lies the solution to our dilemma. Tolerance comes about by understanding and learning about ourselves. It comes from accepting our cultural differences and not judging each other. I have a responsibility to learn about other cultures in Canada; everyone does. I feel we as individuals must take the time and effort to learn about each other: very simply said, but no easy feat. Our ability to survive as a nation will only be as strong as our ability to broach our cultural barriers.

Another key is our ability to compromise. I feel compromise is a word that we have to learn the meaning of over again. I would like to see the federal government's role remain strong, with the ability to provide economic, legal, and social direction to the country as a whole. The provincial role should be as a spearheader of regional and cultural concerns. There should be more dialogue between the federal government and provincial

government. We should ensure that we aren't overlapping any responsibilities. The federal government should be acting as a facilitator or a mediator between the provinces. We have to begin to learn that each part of this country contributes to the whole picture. Let's approach this challenge of constitutional reform with clear minds and an optimistic point of view. Let's take what time is necessary to deliberate and understand the issues and be very careful about deadlines. We are pondering our future. Let's not waste the last 124 years of history because of a deadline.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Wade. Well, you have given us your definition of a Canadian, and I think that you can very well be proud of that definition.

Yes, Fred Bradley.

MR. BRADLEY: Thank you very much for your very thoughtful presentation. You mentioned that our tolerance for differences makes us unique. Do you think that the multiculturalism policy, in the sense where it's been directed and funded by governments, has enhanced this tolerance for our differences? Do you see this as a positive function of government? We've heard from others who feel that our official multiculturalism policy should be disbanded and that we should recognize as individuals what our culture is rather than having it as an instrument of national or provincial policy.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, in response to your question, Mr. Bradley, I believe that multiculturalism is something which is the responsibility of all of us, the government as well as the individual. If we're going to learn about other people and about other cultures, we have to take that initiative ourselves. We have to take that initiative in our school system; we have to take that initiative in the workplace. It's the responsibility of all of us. I can't hope to sit back and learn about another culture if I don't actively participate in terms of that learning, of going out and actually learning about it. Does that answer your question?

MR. BRADLEY: Yes, I think it does.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Other questions, comments?

Well, I have one. Just since you're a young man and obviously a product of Alberta's educational system and you heard our last presenter, what is your view about the level of education that we devote to the history and understanding of Canada within our school system? Was it satisfactory, or should there have been more or less?

MR. CUMMINGS: In my opinion, Mr. Horsman, I think we could probably stand to learn a lot more about Canada and Canadian history. I look back on my schooling and I feel that I perhaps learned more about the isms than about Canada itself, about what we stand for as a country in terms of what democratic process in Canada is about, about how our markets work in terms of being a capitalistic society, a lot about what Canada is about. I really think we could spend a lot more time learning about Canada and about the different industries, about the different cultures that we have here in Canada. I definitely feel we could spend a lot more time learning about Canada versus the types of things that I did learn when I was in school.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And geography. I'm sorry; we have a few more minutes since you didn't utilize all your time. I have three

daughters who all went through school in Alberta right from grades 1 to 12 and then to university and so on. At one particular point in our holiday period we had a little map of the world. It was something to keep kids occupied. They were to fill in the capitals of the world, and not one of my daughters could locate London, England, on the map, and they had a heck of a time with some Canadian cities as well. After that they learned it, not in school but at home. You know, this is a big country, and I've had the advantage, and I know many of my colleagues have as well, of traveling to different parts of the country. Every time we do that the vastness of this country and the diversity really is brought home.

I thank you very much for your thoughtful remarks.

Yes, Bob Hawkesworth.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Could I maybe just follow up on that? This question of the divisions of powers is an important one because the Allaire report in Quebec has suggested that the federal government get out of those areas of jurisdiction that are just identified for the provincial level of government as well as areas where the federal and the provincial governments share jurisdictions, which of course would change dramatically the current division of powers. So when you suggested that there be no overlapping responsibilities and at the same time talked about a strong federal government role, I wonder if you could maybe give us a little more of your thoughts on how we balance those competing viewpoints. If we eliminated overlap and just went to the way the Constitution currently divides responsibilities, the federal government would have to get out of education, health care, housing, and a number of other areas as well. Yet how would we maintain the strong federal government role without some overlapping responsibilities? Could you maybe just give us a few more of your thoughts on that?

MR. CUMMINGS: Okay. That's a good question, Mr. Hawkesworth, and it's something that I have been thinking about. I believe we have to be able to rationalize the federal government and the provincial government so that you don't have redundant services being given to the populace; in other words, we already have a staggering deficit of, I believe, in excess of \$680 billion, and I don't believe we can afford to have duplication of services. Rationalizing the sector of government that is going to provide the service most effectively to the population or the region of the country that requires that service, I think, is one of the ways to go. I also believe in terms of keeping a strong federal government in that any issue which affects our ability to function as a country – it's very important to keep those types of powers within the federal government.

I think in terms of the global economy, we have to look beyond what's happening here in Alberta; we have to look beyond what's happening here in Canada. We are a part of the world, and we have to make sure that we can compete with the other international economies. That's very important, that we make sure we don't end up shooting ourselves in the foot by competing province against province when we should be competing on an international market. Okay?

8:00

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Wade. I appreciate very much what you have given us as your view tonight. Thank you.

MR. CUMMINGS: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Michael Haykowsky.

MR. HAYKOWSKY: I hope I can be as informal as I can.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, by all means.

MR. HAYKOWSKY: Some of the issues I would like to present are somewhat sensitive. First, when we start our Constitution, one of the first questions we have to ask ourselves is our Canadian identity: who is a Canadian, and how are we going to be recognized as Canadians? The reference, of course, is through common cultures that are equivalent to ours. What I've done here is categorize the kind of people we are in the international world. We're from the western culture or the European culture, and the traits we have are also found in their cultures. We're quite a bit different from the Asiatics, the Africans, and the Muslims or the Arabic world. Then, of course, our division starts again into the western culture of Europe: France, Germany, Spain, Great Britain, and so on. Out of that again we divide ourselves into French and English, and that's where our sensitivity lies. That's where our constitutional questions are. That's what you call the ethnicity factor, and I find that extremely touchy.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry, would you give me that term again.

MR. HAYKOWSKY: Ethnicity factor; it's a nationality. We're sensitive about French. We're sensitive about English. We're sensitive about different cultures, and that gets to be quite a serious problem. I've heard comments about the budgets and deficits and so on, but if you can't identify yourself as a Canadian and you want to be a Quebecois, really you don't care what the deficit is in Canada; you're only concerned with the Quebecois deficit, if that's what you're seeing. If you're seeing yourself as an Albertan or a western Canadian, you don't care what happens in Quebec or Toronto or Ontario. You're narrowed down to that region, and that's the division you carry.

Now, I go back to European history. When we speak of ethnicity or nationalism or identification with culture, we can look at European history, and it's as full of examples of the struggles we have with nationalities. More recently and at the present time we're seeing the problems in U.S.S.R., Yugoslavia, Spain with Basque, France with Brittany, some concern of Scotland as part of Great Britain, Belgium with the Walloons and the Flemish, the Turks and the Greeks. This is sort of a common European problem, and we're no different. Although we have our own stripes and our own peculiarities, it is a problem.

Now in a Canadian perspective. French Canadians, particularly the Quebecois, feel they were conquered. They lost a battle in 1759 when they lost Quebec. In 1760 they lost Montreal. They feel that they are conquered, and they say so, their historians claim. Maybe that's the beginning of our history. If that conflict goes on and if that satisfaction isn't obtained by the Quebecois, then that's the beginning of our history, not 1867.

Papineau's another example. Papineau wanted Lower Canada to obtain political rights and freedom as a democracy, but they weren't given that privilege. They lost that privilege. That's a resentment. That's a pain. It hurts them. The death of Louis Riel allowed Henri Bourassa's national government. That's the first Parti Québécois, so to speak, way back in 1885. The Parti Québécois isn't anything new. We've had that linguistic or

cultural problem way back, in fact immediately after the start of Canada.

Another example is the two conscription crises. Prime Minister Borden had to make up a cabinet and a government from the English, so to speak, section of Canada. The opposition was a Quebec section. The big issue was that French-Canadian soldiers didn't want to fight for the British; that wasn't their country. The Queen wasn't their queen. The same thing was repeated in 1940 to 1945. We, too, had a conscription crisis at that time, and it was a major issue. Again, the Parti Québécois got elected. Maybe there are several reasons other than separatism, but the fact is that that constantly remains there.

Then, of course, the defeat of Meech, and we now know the reaction. The reaction was very strong. Another overview, of course, is how do we react politically, how do we vote, and that is on a basis of ethnicity. The French votes and the English-speaking votes. They tell us a lot. There seems to be a trend. Now, it's not generally true, but the English-speaking Canadians vote for parties that will present some sort of ideology. They either vote Conservative, Liberal, some will vote for NDP, and so on. Quebecois, generally speaking, do not vote for a party with a policy but for a party that gains them a balance of power or fights for their rights best of all. It is as if Canada were a nation serving another nation, a subnation called Quebec.

Now, please appreciate that these are my views and these are my analysis. I haven't been analyzing or making any reference to history books or other books of context, except the historical quotes I've made, but the reality is: one questions – and to make it brief – is it possible that the Reform Party and Mr. Manning might be the next Prime Minister if ethnicity becomes an issue, if we really go bringing that ethnic problem, English and French, while the Bloc Québécois get elected and represent the province of Quebec? Will it be possibly the end of what we call our basic parties, the Liberals, Conservatives, or the NDP? I mean, that's a question of history, a future trend. We don't know this, but the thing is, what concerns me most is that ethnicity, a wrong kind of attitude towards cultures, is very dangerous. It's painful, it could hurt a lot of people, it'll increase discrimination, and it isn't going to do us any bit of good. It could create violence and so on.

My view of Canada, if it were to be looked upon as a garden, it's a garden of various kinds of beautiful flowers. Their beauty really lies not so much in the individual flowers as the way they are arranged. That's what makes us Canadians. If we capture that, if we work on that, that's when we will be recognized as a great nation, and that's where our strength lies.

The other aspect is that I have heard very many comments being said that, "Well, if Quebec separates, Canada will fall apart." That's an indicator that the person hasn't got confidence in Canada no matter what happens to it. I think that's just a lack of confidence in leadership. If Alberta separates from the rest of the country – I'm not saying it should – but if it does and if it requires the leadership to do it, that's what has to happen if we separated into 10 different nations. I know it sounds negative and it's a bad thing, but it is the inspiration of leadership that's got to bring us together no matter what happens to the country, because strength lies in sound, solid leadership.

That's all the comments I have to make.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, thank you very much. You mentioned something that nobody has touched on that I can recall in the last four days of hearings, and that was the conscription crisis. Now, I was a youngster during those days, but my father

was overseas, and my mother was also in the armed services. Of course, it was something that was mentioned quite often in our household after the war as I grew up. I've read a great deal about it relative to the attitude of the people of Quebec to that conscription crisis. The view was that it really did sour the relationship between Quebec and the rest of Canada, particularly because a referendum was used in which the English voted overwhelmingly, I gather, in favour of conscription, and Quebec voted against it. Do you recall that being an issue?

8:10

MR. HAYKOWSKY: No. It's a history thing for me.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's a history thing for you, but I've certainly heard from people that it did create lingering animosity towards English Canada on the part of the people of Quebec, because the referendum was imposed upon one province. So that's one of the things that's made some people very nervous about national referenda which might be used to impose on one part of Canada the rule of the majority in the other. Would that give you concern if a referendum were to be used that way?

MR. HAYKOWSKY: I wouldn't approve of it, certainly not, because I hold the view that we do have two nations in one. The Quebecers have their own aspirations. They have their own desire to be their own masters of their own vote so to speak. This is the reason for Meech Lake being such as it is and their disenchantment with Meech Lake, and a referendum like that would be really an encroachment upon their own personal rights. They wouldn't accept it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Any other questions or comments for this gentleman?

Thank you very much, Michael. I think if we could just now, it would be an appropriate time to take a coffee break or time to stretch one's legs in any event. So I'm going to just take a brief adjournment.

[The committee adjourned from 8:12 p.m. to 8:20 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

Doug Johnson is the next presenter, and I'd like to invite him to come forward and make his presentation from the table at the front.

MR. JOHNSON: This is kind of a lonely spot.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, don't feel lonely.

MR. JOHNSON: Actually, I never have, unfortunately.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Or bashful. I don't think you've ever felt bashful, have you?

MR. JOHNSON: No, probably not.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. The order, Doug, and those of you who haven't been here for the opening comments, is that there is 15 minutes. There's a bell that will ring at the end of 10 minutes and then another bell at the end of the last five minutes. So if you could keep that in mind, we'd like to hear from you.

MR. JOHNSON: I did at one time box in a Golden Gloves type of thing, and I do know what the bell means, so I'll start.

Hon. chairman, members of the special committee, ladies and gentlemen, I thank you and the Alberta government for this opportunity to appear before you and discuss this very important issue. I will start by saying that we must recognize some facts, one being that to deny history would be absurd – if we do not know where we came from, it is impossible to chart a course to where we want to go – and also the fact that the future is highly unpredictable. We make educated guesses, but to predict the future with any degree of certainty would make one very rich or at least in great demand by circuses, carnivals, and governments.

We must consider the human factor along with time and distance when we discuss our nation and our constitutional reforms. Whether you believe in creation as put forward by various religions or believe in the theory of evolution, the scientific fact that all humans on earth can be traced back to a common ancestry is well documented. We do not think and act the same. If we did, it would be rather a dull world we live in. In a country that is as immense and diverse as the Canada we live in, it's difficult to arrive at any common policy. Our system of democratic government probably started when small family units of prehistoric people banded together for protection and gathering of food. At this time, it was probably the strongest, wisest, and the best provider that we chose, either by force or by admiration, to lead the clan. Actually, all that has changed is that now we use an X instead of a club.

Our democracy traces its roots to a document called the Magna Carta, presented to an English king in 1266, and also to a violent upheaval and riots that occurred in France that resulted in a republican government being formed. From these two events the democratic society we now enjoy evolved.

Our present country of Canada was created in 1867, and at that time our population was primarily made up of three cultures and races: the English race, the French race, and our native Canadian aboriginal peoples, who probably wish they would have had a different immigration policy in place at the time. Bullets were more effective in discussion over the territory than were arrows, and the outcome of these constitutional arrangements seldom ended up in the native aboriginals' favour.

The system of federalism that was chosen in 1867 recognized the principles that apply today. The territories that were to become provinces were in some cases very large and vast while others were smaller and, in the case of P.E.I. and Newfoundland, were islands. But each of these provinces had one thing in common: they were unique and different, with each one having different cultures, economies, and, let's not forget, climates. Of this there is no doubt. For this reason our system recognized this fact, and various powers of government were delegated to a central federal government and others to a provincial government.

One problem with this arrangement was that the native aboriginal people were mostly excluded from the process and are trying today to search for their place in Confederation. Some have chosen to enter the so-called mainstream and have been elected to various governments at every level, while others have chosen to withdraw to try and determine their place in Canada in their past history.

We are, because of government policies, today at a turning point in the direction of our federation. I will deal with a time frame that coincides specifically with my lifetime. As a native Albertan of 48 summers I have been governed by eight Prime Ministers and their administrations. Of these, two were considered to be western Canadian and governed for one-eighth

of the time. Three Prime Ministers were considered to be central Canadian and governed for two-eighths of this time period. Another three were French Canadian and governed for five-eighths of this time. I point this out because of the fact that the province that is predominantly French Canadian, Quebec, is the most dissatisfied with the current arrangement and its people are the most demanding of change.

Quite simply, the federation that was established in 1867 has very little resemblance to the one that we have today. Our federal government was never meant to have the highly centralized powers it now has, although some provinces that have more or less sold their souls to Ottawa are locked into a system where their very economic survival is at stake. So the question is: how do we change the arrangement or Constitution to fit the problem? One fact of life is that the latest attempt, the failed Meech Lake accord, is now not enough to satisfy Quebec and, at the time, was deemed too much by other Canadians. I feel we must go back to a power-sharing agreement, an arrangement more in line with regional differences.

The following criteria should be used. First, the aboriginal people of Canada must be involved and have a say in their own destiny. The policy of confining aboriginal natives to certain areas and making yearly payments to their bands has not been successful. They must be integrated into the 21st century and not be prisoners of another time.

In overhauling our Constitution, we also must institute some new checks and balances. To start with, this misnomer of upper and lower Houses of Parliament must be dropped and replaced with more applicable names. The House of Commons must remain as the supreme law-making body and should be called the Canadian Parliament. The upper House should be called the Canadian Senate. It has to be elected, equal, and a sober second thought or conscience of the Canadian Parliament. It would remind the Parliament of regional differences and would point out any injustices that would occur.

Our Prime Minister and his sidekick, or deputy, would be elected by all Canadians. MPs would still be elected on a constitutional basis considering population. Similarly, provincial Premiers and the Deputy Premier would also be elected by all voters in a province. MLAs must continue to be elected on a riding basis.

We would continue to have a constitutional figurehead federally and provincially as we do now in our Governor General and the Lieutenant Governors. These appointments would have the duties they do now. Any ties to any foreign countries would be only as a member of a coalition or a commonwealth and would be only recognized as having heads of state as such.

Senators would be elected on a provincial basis by all electors of a province. Elections would be held every four years, with the federal and provincial governments' being at different intervals. Examples would be: 1990 would be a federal election year, and 1992 would be a provincial and Senate election year. Cabinets would continue to be appointed from the elected people with a system of deputy ministers in place as we do now, but their appointments would be only for the four-year period. The judiciary would remain a separate and appointed body and would only interpret the laws of the land and not make them. Finally, no government at any level would be allowed to be in a deficit financial position.

I thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Well, you leave us no doubt as to where you stand, and I know there'll be some questions.

One of the things I think I'd just like to pursue a little bit with you is this. If you're taking a look at the history of Canada, and you refer to the aboriginal peoples and them having been left out of the process, we've heard time and time again that land claims must be settled and that the native peoples must be dealt with fairly. Under the current division of responsibilities, which was the British North America Act originally and now the Canadian Constitution, under section 91(24) Indians and Indian lands were given to be the sole responsibility of the federal government, and the provinces were to have no say at all in the process. For many years the aboriginal peoples, the Indians in particular, said that the provinces must not get involved in any of the discussions. That's changing somewhat, but would you agree with me when I say that the aboriginal peoples and the provinces and the federal government have to work together to resolve that issue?

8:30

MR. JOHNSON: Yes, I would, but with this qualification: the only province that has done so is Alberta. You can go to any other province and talk to any member of any aboriginal race or band, and it is Alberta that is one of the few that has sat down and actually made settlements with them so that they have a constitutional place to be involved in. We take our recent Metis settlement that was done. The Lubicon band is a good example. There's no problem with the Alberta government there; it's federally that it's happened.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Jack Ady, Gary Severtson.

MR. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Doug. You spoke of the aboriginal involvement in any new constitutional arrangement and then went on to say that you felt that they should be integrated. When you say "integrated," are you talking about integrated into the mainstream of Canadianism as we know it? Or would they still have their lands and reservations and special concessions that might be made to them? What did you mean by integrated?

MR. JOHNSON: Well, I'll put it this way. I have quite a few native friends. The ones that seem to be well adjusted and are involved with their communities, whether on a reserve or not on a reserve, are the ones that have stepped out of the reserve system. Now, they still might be tied to it through blood or through concession or through monetary involvement, but we, I feel, have locked them into a certain area that they have no escape from. It hasn't proven successful, the arrangement we have with them. It has proven very detrimental to their culture, to their livelihood, any way you want to call it. I feel it'd be far better if – and it's a big "if" – they could be put into the mainstream of society.

MR. ADY: Thank you. The other question I had pertains to your view of the Senate. You suggested that it should be elected and equal and then went on to say that it would be the House of sober second thought, but you didn't really go on to say to how effective it might be in relation to the House of Commons. Did you fall short of calling for a triple E Senate?

MR. JOHNSON: Not really. I think the triple E Senate is one that's elected, equal, and how effective they can be is going to be determined by how they operate. Being elected to start with would help immensely. Being equal would make sure that certain things that have happened under our Constitution could

never happen again. Or they could happen, but at least there'd be a helluva lot bigger fight than there was at the time. The effective part: they would only be effective as far as pointing out to the Parliament of Canada, which would be supreme, that there are injustices being done to the regions. In this way there may be some time frame we'd have to impose, so that they would have a certain number of days, hours, months to make these points known. I would think that if we looked back to what happened with the national energy program, if there had been an elected and equal Senate, the effectiveness would have been felt. I feel it would have been. It wouldn't have been just railroaded through.

MR. ADY: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, Gary . . . Sorry, Jack.

MR. ADY: No. I'm finished.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Gary Severtson and then Yolande Gagnon.

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Doug, you mentioned that you felt that the Prime Minister, the Premier, and the Deputy Premier or Deputy Prime Minister should be elected by the people at large. Now, how would that work in our present system? The way we do it now, the Prime Minister or the Premier picks his own cabinet. There could be a situation such that the Premier could be the leader with the lowest number of seats.

MR. JOHNSON: Right.

MR. SEVERTSON: How would that person pick a cabinet to be the Executive Council if he represents a minority?

MR. JOHNSON: We're going to change this stuff. We're not going to sit here and look at what has been or can't be done. We've got to borrow a little bit. The Yankees maybe did have a little bit of foresight in this area. When you have an election, you have it for a number of years. Like, the government can't be defeated, eh? They can lose a Bill and the government is still going to be there. In our system we have now, the government can be defeated and we're right back into an election, which may or may not prove anything. This system would be there. You would have the people of all of Canada choosing the Prime Minister and his deputy or vice-Premier or president.

MR. SEVERTSON: But, Doug, in the States the President picks his executive, and they're not elected people.

MR. JOHNSON: I know. This is the difference I propose, that they would be elected people. He would have to pick from the elected people.

MR. SEVERTSON: So he could be picking from the opposition quite easily then?

MR. JOHNSON: Oh, easily.

MR. SEVERTSON: It could easily happen, yes.

MR. JOHNSON: It could easily happen, but the law-making body is still going to be the Parliament.

MR. SEVERTSON: Okay. Thank you.

MRS. GAGNON: I'd like to follow up on Jack Ady's question. Our first speaker today was Roy Louis, a Samson Cree from Hobbema, and he mentioned that the natives under the treaties – and especially in section 35 of the Charter it honours those treaties – should have a measure of self-determination. They should decide, for instance, if the reserve system is to be done away with. I guess I can appreciate that, because if they leave the reserve and go to the city, they become nonstatus and there's no arrangement for them to benefit from a land claim that might be engaged in and so on. Would you agree that to resolve all of these things, the whole matter has to be left in their hands? That's what self-determination means, I guess, the way I see it: that they will decide whether they should continue with the reserve system or not.

MR. JOHNSON: I'd put myself in their place. If I'd grown up on a reserve, I would have had probably two or three choices. I would have had a choice to be able to have access to education, a definite system of – what would you call it? – not welfare, but a guaranteed wage probably, and probably a place in that reserve or outside of it, if I chose to. I think if we continue with the system we have now in place, we tie their hands. It's got to be up to the population of the reserve, or the Indian band, to bring themselves into the mainstream of society. They cannot continue to live in the past. It just isn't there.

MRS. GAGNON: But you agree that it's up to them to determine that, and that's what the treaties protect on their behalf: self-determination?

MR. JOHNSON: Of course it does. That was signed, eh?

MRS. GAGNON: Yeah.

MR. JOHNSON: They have to live within Canadian law, though. It's not feasible for them to do otherwise.

MRS. GAGNON: I'm not talking about the law. I'm talking more about, you know, their right to determine whether they will continue with the system of reservations or move into communities or whatever.

MR. JOHNSON: Right. You betcha. Of course.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Bob Hawkesworth.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Johnson, for your presentation tonight. Your last point had to do with governments not being able to run deficits. It wasn't too, too many years ago, I guess '86, when the world price of oil dropped down to something like \$10 or \$12 a barrel, and our provincial government ran up a deficit that year of \$4 billion. Would you be willing to acknowledge that there might be some circumstances when a provincial government or even a federal government would find themselves in a situation that it would be impossible to avoid a deficit situation? Would you be willing to recognize that there are some circumstances that . . .

MR. JOHNSON: Well, I fully understand that. I'm a farmer, and they call me a businessman. The last couple of years I've realized what a deficit position is. We've been farming at the location we're at since 1908, where we homesteaded, and I think

maybe we've had deficit years too, but we have cleared them up as soon as we could. I understand that you could run into a situation where there is an extreme downturn in things.

I'd point out to you that the downturn in the oil prices was also triggered by a federal government policy called the national energy program, which, if you followed both things through, really, really hurt Alberta and western Canada. It was one government taking from another government, which probably never ever should have happened. So I could understand, but surely in a time period of six months or a year, you should be able to say to the people: "Look, we're going to give you these programs. You're going to have to pay for them now. We're not going to pass them on to your children, your grandchildren, your great-grandchildren to pay for what you're getting today."

8-40

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, thank you very much, Doug, for your very eloquent and forceful presentation. I know we could have interesting dialogue with you, but we have two young gentlemen who are next in line: Sandy Dong and Jon Stolee.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

MR. DONG: First of all, we'd like to sincerely thank the Alberta government and this committee for giving us this opportunity to be heard today.

MR. STOLEE: Canada is a country which needs to guarantee all fundamental and universal rights, privileges, and freedoms of citizenship to every citizen completely apart from and regardless of race, culture, language, religion, or history. This is a fundamental strength of democracy. With it we could live knowing that we belong to a free and unprejudiced society. Without universal freedoms, regions of Canada gain authority and credibility in attempts to gain privilege for one segment of society and to deny it to others.

For this reason, we strongly oppose the notwithstanding clause of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Our Charter is intended to be an irrefutable document to protect the rights and the needs of all Canadians. Section 33 helps out a government which feels it ought to have the authority to override the Charter. What's the point of guaranteeing our rights if they can be revoked? We would like to see this provision removed from any new Constitution because of the abuse and the inequality it facilitates. This would promote Canadian unity because French, English, and others would realize that their rights and freedoms were going to be protected forever. Hopefully, this would also act to dispel the fear and paranoia which is growing on both sides.

Many Quebecers have expressed their desire to nullify Confederation and to create an independent, French-only nation. We would like to first point out that we feel Canada is a better country because of Quebec. A large part of our Canadian heritage is French. However, although we want Quebec to stay in Canada, it would be morally wrong to subvert the ideals of the majority of Canadians for the purpose of appeasing the French. It is our feeling that one Constitution and one Charter of Rights and Freedoms must apply universally to all Canadians. There must not be two sets of standards, one for Quebecers and one for the rest of us. We do not wish a sovereignty association in which Quebec could act independently yet maintain influence in Canadian affairs. Americans can't vote

here; neither should a citizen of an independent Quebec. Ties with Quebec are not so important to us that we would give up Canadian autonomy just to maintain association with Quebec.

Should Quebec separate – and we hope they don't, but if they do decide that life in Canada is so intolerable, they must carry the burden of debt that has been racked up on their behalf. This should consist of debts owed to out-of-Canada institutions, because the holders of Canada savings bonds should not be forced to be the creditors of Quebec. Also, Quebec should be responsible for the costs of separation if that is the road they choose.

It is our opinion that a federal system is the best system, and it is close to what we have right now. It is obviously in everyone's best interests to eliminate job duplication between the federal and provincial governments. This, however, does not involve the radical changes proposed by many people who would like to see an independent Quebec or sovereignty association or other change which would diminish our federal system. The federal government should be the dominant institution of Canada and should have authority over all other regional and municipal governments. It is understandable that provinces may desire more power to deal with their individual affairs, but this accumulation of power and responsibility at the provincial level poses dangers. Canadian unity is sometimes weak. Provinces seem to constantly argue about one thing or another. With a diminished federal government there would be less of a credible force to settle disputes and control the anger of regions. A strong federal government can or ought to take a leadership role in launching all Canadians to greater achievements and quality of life.

MR. DONG: We feel the Alberta government should continue to lobby for a triple E Senate, one that is equal, elected, and effective. Part of the role of the Senate is to guarantee the equal representation of all regions of Canada in the national lawmaking process. This aspect should not be changed; however, the upper House should be elected in order to be more active and credible in the parliamentary system. If I'm not mistaken, the appointment of the Senate stems from the fears of 18th and 19th century people, when democracy was a relatively new and untried concept and it was then considered that left-wing and radical parliamentarians and democrats would rashly run the nation into the ground. Today the democratic process has proven its worth and that it indeed does work, so there is no longer a need for an appointed body. Do not get us wrong. There still needs to be a set of checks and balances between the two Houses, but the Senate need not be appointed any longer.

MR. STOLEE: When the first Europeans arrived in North America, they were on land that belonged to the native peoples of the area. The land was given to the Europeans in exchange for materials, reservations, and promises. It is a disgrace that these promises and reservations have been violated repeatedly by our governments for so many years. Of course, we realize it is not feasible today to give away land under areas of dense population, but now is the time to live up to our promises and then lay our problems to rest. Our government needs to make fair settlement of every native treaty claim. This does not mean giving away unreasonable sums of money but being prepared and willing to offer reasonable trades, permanent settlement of the treaty in return for significant land and money. It is in the best interests of all concerned to put past conflict behind us forever.

MR. DONG: Perhaps the main cause of the political and social upheaval plaguing our country today is the lack of a Canadian identity. Our diverse and vast nation, geographically and otherwise, makes it difficult for a citizen in, for example, Camrose, Alberta, to identify with a person in Cornwall, Prince Edward Island, 3,500 kilometres away. Now, the Americans were stirred to unity by their slogan of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," while the 18th-century French were calling for "liberté, égalité, et fraternité." By contrast, the Canadian theme is a modest "peace, order, and good government." Perhaps this lack of patriotism and moral forte reflects in our disunity today.

What constitutes a national identity, a national unity? How can we bond all peoples from sea to sea, as the saying goes, a distance of over 4,000 kilometres, into one nation? We feel that a Canadian identity begins at the grass-root level, in the hearts and minds of every citizen. The country must present its people with a single, unifying goal, idea, or pride. This can be the ideal of living in harmony under a guarantee of rights and freedoms or living in a society that is just and merciful or living in a society that protects individual cultures and customs. Perhaps this identity can be accomplished through our education system. Perhaps we should be teaching the youth more of our Canadian heritage and history. Surprisingly to some, we do have a history.

8:50

If I may relate a personal experience, I was in Ottawa on the Encounters with Canada program two months ago. Through it I met other students from across Canada. I can now truly identify with our country. Through this program, sponsored by the Council for Canadian Unity, I now have a greater understanding of this country, its people, its heritage, and my role in this nation we call Canada. I can now appreciate the problems facing Canada, from regionalism to language barriers, and of course realizing the problem is half the solution.

Perhaps that is a trouble. People hear of the national disputes of unity, regionalism, sovereignty, but they do nothing because it does not affect them directly, not as much as the next pay raise or this month's mortgage. So the problems are ignored and therefore compounded. We fear that Canada may have lost its vision. Has the fire and passion that forged our nation in London in 1867 been lost? Will Canadian apathy dissolve our country? Fearfully, perhaps it may. We seem to have shown more enthusiasm for the Stanley Cup playoffs between two American teams than for Canada Day. These days it seems that polls are done daily, as if they were a national pastime. Most have come up with the same conclusion: that Canada is in trouble. People are unhappy. Quebeckers feel overwhelmed by English Canada. At the same time, English Canada feels threatened by Quebec. Sadly, as Canadians we get along so well on the international scene. We get along with the Russians, the Chinese, the Japanese, yet we can't get along with ourselves.

We would like to say that Canadians must now stop diagnosing the problem and start looking for solutions. We know our nation is in trouble. We now must ask: what are we going to do about it? Perhaps this step is the most crucial of all, and perhaps this is the step many Canadians fail to make. Therefore, we challenge all Canadians to ask themselves: what am I prepared to do? This may mean sacrificing television in order to participate in Canada Day. In the words of a visionary leader, a type of leader that Canada would love to have today: "Ask not what your country can do for you, [but] what you can do for your country." Profound words, meaningful words. Perhaps by contributing to the country, by giving to the country,

a citizen can at last identify with it and proudly call himself Canadian.

That ends our presentation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, both of you young men. You've done very well. You've given us encouragement. Yes, Ken Rostad.

MR. ROSTAD: Thanks, Mr. Chairman, and Jon, Sandy, and your supporters that you have brought with you, thank you very, very much. The evening's been filled with youth, and that doesn't mean anything against those of us that are past 20, but it's meaningful that youth can think about Canada and what it means to you and what it should mean to the rest.

Jon, when you were speaking, you were saying federalism is the best system and it's good to have a strong central government. Did either of you address in your mind as to whether the division of powers that we presently have in the Constitution – section 91 listing for the federal powers and 92 for the provinces – should be changed, that we need more transferred to the federal or central government or more to the provinces?

MR. STOLEE: I see as the biggest thing that if you're going to change something, change it for more efficiency so there's not the duplication. But as for the powers and the responsibility, I don't have a great opinion because you have to know about every different department. The things that affect everybody in Canada should largely be done by the federal government, if it's not an individual thing by province. Yeah, we should try and promote equality and unity through the national programs, but provincial ones should not be the ones that are right across Canada.

MR. ROSTAD: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Other questions? Well, one of the things you've touched on – of course, we've heard time and time again – is the concern for the native peoples and getting a fair deal. One of the problems provinces have had, however, is that that is the sole responsibility of the federal government under section 91(24), and many of the Indian peoples themselves have resisted the provinces becoming involved in any way in those discussions. Yet the provinces are obligated to provide the land bases necessary, at least in Alberta, to meet the land claims. So would you agree with me when I say that the native peoples and the provinces and the federal government all have to sit down together in order to resolve these problems?

MR. STOLEE: Well, government being the people elected by the people, it should be seen largely as one body, provincial or federal. So land belonging to the government, federal or provincial, should be available for the land claims. The provincial and federal governments should be working together to get them settled and settled quickly and fairly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, that's one of the big differences between Canada and the United States. It's the provinces that own the land. The federal government owns land in the Northwest Territories and the national parks, and that's about it. So they really don't have much land to put up to settle these land claims. That's why I'm making the point. Really, you've got to have all the parties involved, not just the federal government and the Indians. It's an interesting perspective, and I thought I'd just point that out to you.

Yolande.

MRS. GAGNON: I guess I would just say quickly that you've given me a lot of hope. I'm one who is full of fire and passion about my country, and I'm glad to see that there are young people who share that. I guess the idea of history and travel – those are things that you would recommend, very important for all of us to know more about each other and about our story.

On the notwithstanding clause, you said you oppose it. Yet I'm sure you're aware that it was the price of getting a Constitution. To get everyone to agree – except, of course, Quebec didn't sign it – there had to be that notwithstanding clause there. Would you like to comment on that a little bit?

MR. DONG: Okay. I'll say something first. It was a compromise. To what extent should we compromise such a principle just to appease the province of Quebec?

MRS. GAGNON: But I think in fact it was our former Premier, Premier Lougheed, who suggested the notwithstanding clause. Am I correct? It was one way of getting a compromise at the time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It was more than one province, as a matter of fact; it was several of the provinces. The principle behind it was that rather than transferring the ultimate decision-making to appointed courts, the parliaments of the provinces and the federal government could remain supreme over appointed bodies. In other words, the elected people would ultimately have the say. It's only in effect for five years. So it was a compromise suggested, yes, and it would be, I would think, very difficult in the negotiation with Quebec and several of the other provinces, perhaps including Alberta, to make that a turning point on changing the Constitution in another negotiation, but I appreciate your comments.

MR. DONG: In retrospect, we think that it was a mistake to compromise like that. I think it was in 1988 the Quebec government used the notwithstanding clause to overrule the Supreme Court. For example, any government can do that if they have a majority in the House. They can just implement this clause. If they're unhappy with the decision, can they appeal? This is why we have an appeal system.

MR. CHAIRMAN: They can't appeal beyond the Supreme Court. We could go on at some length about this. It does not apply to many aspects of the Charter of Rights. It's only a certain limited number of aspects of the Charter of Rights that the notwithstanding clause can be used for. I agree with you that it was a terrible political mistake for the government of Quebec, because I think it was at that point in time, the utilization of that, that public opinion turned against the Meech Lake accord. Politically, I think that is why we're doing what we are today.

In any event, thank you very much, gentlemen for your thoughtful presentation. Keep on studying the history, and remember this: you're a part of it now, because what we're doing here is a small part of Canadian history, and you've contributed.

Thank you very much.

MR. DONG: Thank you.

MR. STOLEE: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: David Gosse.

MR. GOSSE: Good evening.

9:00

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Gosse, we are operating under a very tight time frame this evening. We are keeping the presentations to 15 minutes because we have to return to Edmonton, but please continue. You know what happens at the 10-minute bell.

MR. GOSSE: Yes. The letter I left here is one I sent to your office earlier. I've got a couple of pages here I'd like to read.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

MR. GOSSE: I'm a Canadian. I have no hyphen. There's a tendency in Canada to hyphenate everyone. Until the mid-70s a Canadian could not put "Canadian" on a government document. Just two years ago I watched an interview on CBC where they asked a teenaged Canadian girl if she considered herself French or English. There wasn't a third choice. This has fractionalized Canadian society and become institutionalized through multiculturalism and biculturalism. A new Constitution must step out of this trap. If we are discouraged from calling ourselves Canadians by our own government, is it any wonder that many people feel discriminated against?

Previous constitutional agreements have tried to correct this by granting special status to one group or another. This only results in another group rising up and demanding their own protections. If Canada is to work, we must recognize and affirm the fundamental equality of all Canadians regardless of race, religion, gender, or ethnic background. A Canadian is a Canadian, and citizens must be confident that they will receive the same treatment from their government as any other citizen.

The people of this country must also be provided with a mechanism that allows them a greater say in how government is run. These demands for more responsive government are a worldwide phenomenon caused by greater access to information that most people now enjoy. Information was scarce and slow moving 20 or 30 years ago. Now we can find out what's happening around the world in minutes, and the citizens often know more about a given subject than the experts. When this happens, people feel they should have a say in how something is done, especially when the experts are wrong as often as they're right. With today's technology it's a relatively simple matter to institute direct democracy, and while this would not work for day-to-day government, it could be used for broad policy decisions.

I watch the news and read the papers and am frightened by what I see happening to my country. The natives in Oka are ready to rise up again, as are natives across the country. Quebec is going to secede, with who knows what consequences. Meanwhile, the people that are supposed to be our leaders dither and play politics to see who gets what. My feeling is that a constituent assembly, while as flawed as any other method, would probably achieve consensus. This could then be ratified by a province-by-province referendum with all provinces approving. This method is as prone to failure as any other, but it would give all Canadians a say in how their country looks in the 21st century without the complaint that any one person or region was left out of the process.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. You've made a strong case for a constituent assembly. How would you see the people being chosen? By election?

MR. GOSSE: I think that's as good a way as any just for the term of the constituent assembly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just for that specific purpose.

MR. GOSSE: Yeah.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You wouldn't see people being appointed, however, by government.

MR. GOSSE: Well, government has become a special interest group in and of itself. A lot of what government does is to protect itself, so there's a lot of lost trust in government right now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could I just make it clear? You said each province would have a referendum.

MR. GOSSE: It would be a province-by-province referendum, and each province would have to approve unanimously.

MR. CHAIRMAN: In other words, if Alberta voted no . . .

MR. GOSSE: Back to the drawing board.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Back to the drawing board. So that's clear. Okay.

Questions?

Bob Hawkesworth.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thanks. One of the proposals that Quebec has been making in terms of recognizing their situation, or distinctiveness, has been to propose quite a radical reshuffling of the divisions of powers between the two levels of government, basically to strengthen considerably the provincial powers at the expense of the federal government. Do you have any particular thoughts on whether we should adopt that or modify it or go along with it or strongly resist it?

MR. GOSSE: I feel that both levels of government should have less power. Right now you elect a government for up to five years. With a majority they can do whatever they wish. There are no limitations on the powers of government, federally or provincially, except the squabbles between each other. There has to be some way to slow down government. You look at the GST with 80 percent of the citizens saying no. Whether it's a good tax or a bad tax is immaterial; you should have some way of stopping it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much for your comments. I appreciate your comments about the GST because I don't think there's anybody at this table that likes it very much and, as you know, not very many Canadians. One of the things that, of course, has been suggested is putting major issues such as that to referenda. The ability to raise taxes is tough in any event, especially when people want to continue to have a high level of services such as medicare and education and social services and so on. The ability to get those taxes is tough, and knowing how to get public support for tax increases is awfully difficult.

MR. GOSSE: I would suggest doing it by initiative: instead of having your tax going to general revenues and then disbursed from there, specific taxes for specific projects so people can see where their money is going.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, I see. Well, you've given us some interesting thoughts. I know you've given us a fairly lengthy presentation, which I thank you for. You had sent it to us back in February, and we've had the chance to review that. We appreciate your coming forward, as we do the other 30 members of the audience who have been participants since 1 o'clock this afternoon.

It's been a very good day in my opinion as chairman of the committee. I want to thank everyone who participated. This is an example, I think, of your Legislature at work in a somewhat different forum than normally one sees. You see opposition members co-operating with government members, being polite to each other. That happens quite more often than you might think happens if you only watch the question period, which of course is a little bit of theatre which occurs every day in the Legislative Assembly. We do think that the exercise has been very helpful to all members of the committee, and I want to thank the people of Camrose and district for giving such a great deal of careful thought to the presentations which they put forward. I'm encouraged by the fact that everybody who came forward started out by saying they're Canadians. That's great.

From here we go back to Edmonton tomorrow to fill in and meet some of the people who wanted to see us last Friday and Saturday. From there we go to Lethbridge and then to the city of Medicine Hat, for which I have a particular affinity, and then back to Calgary for another day and a half of hearings. The other panel is in the process, as I mentioned to you earlier, of moving about the province as well. When we've completed this exercise – and as you know, the Legislature adjourned for this week so that we could carry out this responsibility – we'll get together on June 6 and decide whether or not it will be necessary to hold additional public hearings. If it is, in our view, necessary to do that in order to seek out the views of Albertans, if there are further requests from Albertans to meet with them in a forum such as this, we will do so.

I hope that nobody felt overly intimidated by the process. As I said at the outset, we haven't bitten anybody to date, and I think at the end of today we can say that in all honesty once again.

Thank you all very much for your participation. I hope you leave here feeling better as Canadians that you've had a chance to say your piece and to know that we are serious about working together for the future of our country.

Thank you very much.

[The committee adjourned at 9:10 p.m.]