

7:22 p.m.

Tuesday, September 10, 1991

[Chairman: Mr. Horsman]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ladies and gentlemen, I think we'd like to get the proceedings under way. We have a couple of presentations this evening. We heard from a number of people this afternoon. Since none of you were here this afternoon, I'll quickly introduce myself. I'm Jim Horsman. I'm the chairman of this select committee, and I'm the member of the Legislature for Medicine Hat.

Starting on my left.

MR. CHIVERS: Barrie Chivers, MLA, Edmonton-Strathcona.

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

MRS. GAGNON: Yolande Gagnon, Calgary-McKnight.

MS BETKOWSKI: Nancy Betkowski, Edmonton-Glenora.

MR. ANDERSON: Dennis Anderson, Calgary-Currie.

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

MR. SEVERTSON: Gary Severtson, Innisfail.

MR. CHAIRMAN: On my left is Garry Pocock, the secretary. I call John Sheehan.

MR. SHEEHAN: My name is John Sheehan. I'm a resident of Peace River. I've lived here roughly 10 years. I've got a few notes here that I'd like to express opinions on.

The framework and underlying principles of the new Canadian Constitution must not only formalize the relationship that binds Canada together but must lay the groundwork to develop an effective means of organizing our society for the benefit of all Canadians, present and future, while preserving the ecological integrity that supports all life. This must be clearly defined with no other provision given higher priority. Economic production must be regulated to meet the public's economic and social needs, placing greater economic and social good ahead of private profit while providing individual dignity, freedom, and human rights. This must be defined in a written Charter of Rights and Freedoms, in my opinion.

Freedom of information is also essential for public trust. It must be in the Constitution and apply to all federal, provincial, territorial, regional, and municipal governments and readily accessible to all members of the public without bureaucratic roadblocks. A charter of collective rights must also be included providing rights similar to those of the individual, making governments accountable to public groups. Canada must not continue to be controlled almost exclusively by only white, militant, business-oriented men for primarily their own profit, which brings me to the Meech Lake accord.

If the objective of the federal and provincial governments is to destroy the bonds that hold Canada together and allow even more rampant exploitation by foreign corporate interests, in coordination with the free trade agreement, of Canadian resources, including business interests and the consequential environmental degradation, then Meech Lake and Brian Mulroney's free trade agreement are what are necessary. The Meech Lake accord would transfer federal responsibility to the provincial govern-

ments, that are even less accountable for their actions, in my opinion. I believe that this would cause a very fundamental problem which would eventually lead to the disintegration of Canada by foreign and corporate interests being able to pick apart the provinces individually, exploiting resources for their own benefit.

National standards for education, health, and social services as well as a healthy environment must be guaranteed to all Canadians. There should be no internal barriers to mobility, trade, or employment. Negotiated aboriginal self-determination and territorial agreements should also be entrenched in the Constitution. However, constitutional reform is just the beginning of what is really necessary, which is to provide Canada with a positive outlook instead of the continual deteriorating process that now exists. Constitutional reform, even if successful and favourable to Canadians, will be hollow without fundamental changes and improvements to federal and provincial parliaments, to legislative processes, to the judicial and legal systems, to the electoral regulations, and to current political processes.

One objective of the Constitution should be to help provide direction for political motivation, which must be governed by the long-term interests of the biosphere of the planet in reference to Canada, not short-term personal or partisan interests which have too often motivated politicians. Such objectives should also be formalized in all forms of regulations that govern politicians.

Another aspect of political reform should be the restriction of campaign contributions and political favours to candidates or parties to a level at which favouritism, or the perception of favouritism, could not reasonably exist. Conflict of interest guidelines should be common for all governments of Canada to avoid improper practices by politicians or bureaucrats, or again the perception of such. These guidelines could include lengthy cooling-off periods after leaving government. Such measures, if scrutinized and agreed to in public hearing formats, could regain confidence in government by the citizens. One possibility for stimulating political motivation of long-term over short-term motivations, which is difficult in the current electoral system, would be to provide pension incentives. An example would be increased pension benefits for long-term performance of government programs that were beneficial to the country or province.

An existing problem with the federal/provincial parliamentary structure, in my opinion, is that the Prime Minister or Premier, though elected by only one riding, represents the entire country or province and has essential dictatorial powers if he so chooses. The Constitution should correct such a problem by mandating the PM to act as a facilitator, not a dictator.

Another problem has become obvious, an example being that a PM or a Premier provides preferential treatment for his own riding or province. In the case of the Prime Minister a situation has occurred that for the past 25 years, except for a year and a half, he has come from Quebec, and add to that \$90 billion in transfer payments and approximately \$90 billion in bilingualism policies and we've created a situation of extreme animosity that has come to threaten the potential disintegration of the country.

One possible suggestion to avoid such conflicts or perceptions would be to require that the party leader be selected on a rotational basis from different regions of the country or province. Another suggestion would be to have cabinet ministers selected by the Prime Minister in consultative agreement with a nonpartisan public committee based on their individual qualifications. Selection of such ministers could potentially come from all parties represented in the House or Legislature, based roughly on the percentage of the popular vote for the given

party. On the surface the mixing of political philosophies may sound disastrous, but it couldn't be any worse than the changing of parties every few years that in some cases tear down the accomplishments of their predecessors.

Such a system could help resolve a number of existing problems, such as allowing for political representatives to work together for the common good of the country and provinces as opposed to short-term partisan personal interests, also provide a feeling of regional equality, which could help reduce regional dissension. Having more knowledgeable individuals heading ministries would lead to more public credibility, resulting in decisions being made, again, with more long-term interests. This would also place the emphasis on political parties to solicit candidates with knowledge and experience.

Such a system would also create something that resembles a democracy as opposed to what now exists: voting as infrequently as every five years. The existing system can be manipulated to an extent that it is, in my opinion, a disgrace to the principle of democratic representation; for example, after winning a majority government with, in some cases, as little as 40 percent of the popular vote, the Prime Minister or Premier and a small group of advisers and party elite formulate policy in secret and try to sell it by any means possible in some cases. In the beginning they implement all the unpopular and in some cases irresponsible agenda without any public involvement or input or without any justification. They can intentionally mislead the public without accountability and make the public pay for the secret agenda, then when an election is upcoming spend tax dollars on publicity for their programs, waste more money on unnecessary facilities in key ridings to hopefully get re-elected.

Is it any wonder that our country is in such a difficult situation?

7:32

Regarding political reform, the Constitution must entrench equal representation for both federal and provincial governments by designating ridings with an equal number of voters, plus or minus 5 percent. There are other ways for supporting low population areas, which is supposedly the reason for having less populated areas with greater representation, one of which would be to redesign the upper House to represent biogeographic regions with an equal number of representatives from each. Such a House could represent not only low population density areas but be responsible for protecting the integrity or helping to account for the integrity of ecosystems and indigenous lifestyles and resources within that particular bioregion.

I don't believe that a Senate should be based on the artificial boundaries as delineated by provinces, or in a government that only represents individuals and not the land and biosphere.

On a separate point regarding the judicial system, I believe that judges should not be appointed only by the governing party but by agreement with an all-party committee. The legal system should not be used as a device to win an action by attrition, as is currently the case. Whoever has the most money can frequently postpone and delay court cases to their own advantage. Those with less financial resources at their disposal don't have equal opportunity.

Another issue, I believe, is that Quebec, as in Lower Canada, is a distinct society, as are the indigenous peoples of Canada, and should have the opportunity to control the destiny of their culture. However, such a recognition does not include sovereignty or sovereignty association. In the case of Quebec financial assistance to maintain their culture should not be at the expense of the rest of Canada. However, in regard to in-

igenous cultures Canada has retribution to pay in a form that is agreeable to native people.

Canadian educational institutions and school boards bear a portion of the burden for the poor understanding and consequential intolerance of native and foreign cultures by Canadians. Little or no information was provided by most schools on Canada's indigenous cultures, little on French or on other cultures.

With the recognition of distinct cultures within Canada comes the responsibility of placing at least equal importance onto the unity of the country in general by the distinct cultures, for without Canada the ability to preserve these cultures from foreign and multinational interests does not exist. I believe that much of the dissension between Quebec and the rest of Canada exists due again to the inadequate methods in which the country and its provinces are governed along with the political manoeuvres and the partisan agendas of many federal and provincial governments. Language rights for natives, French, English, and other cultures should be enacted in the Constitution, but services should only be provided, in my opinion, to minority cultures where numbers and associated tax revenues warrant, unless special payment for special service arrangements were chosen by those particular groups.

The efficiencies of all levels of government must be another priority. Waste does not benefit anyone in the long term. Incentive must be provided to government and civil servants and public employees to operate efficiently, but essential public services should not be turned over to private interests. The government must have control over the country's resource base as an essential part of the ability to carry on the future of our country.

Civil servants must be protected to be able to account directly to the public and not only to the minister. It is wrong for a civil servant to be fired for telling the truth to the public when a minister can intentionally provide false information to the public without accountability. Government ministers and bureaucrats must be legally accountable to the public if they intentionally mislead, falsify information or documents, violate laws, or do not enforce regulations as they should.

The federal government should encourage joint ownership, joint benefit, and joint profit relations with labour and management. The purpose would be to develop more co-operative, efficient, and innovative business in Canada and avoid counter-productive labour confrontations. However, if labour are to bargain on equal grounds with management, which is necessary in such an agreement, the Constitution should accommodate the freedom to strike and picket. Also, right-to-work legislation should not be allowed. If a majority of workers vote in favour of having a trade union bargain on their behalf, such a union must represent all workers. Poor management practices result in poor labour relations, which benefits no one.

Until Canadians are given the opportunity to arrive at a consensus, we will continue to work at opposing purposes, as has been the case too frequently in the past. The Constitution has the opportunity to develop the framework to allow for the many necessary reforms I have mentioned and many that I have not had time to mention here.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. It was very comprehensive.

Are there questions or comments? Yes.

MR. CHIVERS: John, one of the recurring themes in your comments has to do with the protection of the environment. One of the concepts that's been placed by a number of presenters before this committee is the concept of an environmental bill of rights. I take it that that's what you're speaking of entrenching.

MR. SHEEHAN: Yes, I believe that would be a very positive step.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, Dennis.

MR. ANDERSON: John, that was a very well-thought-out presentation. I'm wondering; you mentioned at the beginning a series of different dimensions of our society which could be included in, you said, the Charter of Rights. Now, the Charter of Rights means of course that the Supreme Court will judge whether or not that Charter is lived up to. Do you have faith in the judicial system to the degree that in all of those elements they would be able to make those judgments, that they would have the resources and the ability to do that?

MR. SHEEHAN: Well, it's no doubt a difficult task depending upon the challenges that would be brought towards it. I think one of the problems, as I mentioned, is that in the public perception judges aren't always operating in the best interests of the public but because of whoever appointed them may have political favours or whatever. So I guess there could be that concern entering into the issue as well. It would be difficult for me to estimate whether, you know, there are adequate facilities to be able to accommodate based on our present system.

Was there something more specific?

MR. ANDERSON: Would it be fair to say that your concern is that those items that you identified – particularly the environment but others that you identified – be addressed and dealt with by a government? The mechanism is not as important to you, or do you feel that the Charter is the place for those, and the legal process as opposed to the elected process is the right way to go?

MR. SHEEHAN: I think they should be in the Charter, but I think they should also be accommodated in other means and other formats as well. I think it should be one of the guiding principles for the political system as well as the judicial system and as well as laws adapted that would guarantee that a Charter of Rights and the bill of environmental rights would be protected and guaranteed and that if they weren't, the public would be able to challenge them through a legal means.

MR. ANDERSON: Okay. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, Yolande.

MRS. GAGNON: I don't know if you're aware that the province of Alberta has instituted conflict of interest laws. I do sit on a committee that is now working out that particular Bill.

MR. SHEEHAN: I was aware that there was a process going on. I wasn't aware that they've actually been instituted.

MRS. GAGNON: Yeah. Well, the Bill has been passed. Now it's a matter of working out how it's going to function.

My question dealt more with competing interests. Yesterday in Edmonton we heard from someone who represents resource-based groups, and his bottom line was investment opportunities in Alberta, that taking into account the environment and so on, groups should still have the right to, I guess, come down on the side of investment opportunities. Now, you are saying that the bottom line should never be profit.

7:42

MR. SHEEHAN: No. I didn't mean to imply or have you perceive that it should never come down on the side of profit, but I believe that public interests – people in general, the environment – should be given priority over solely profit-based motives. Now, profit of course is an essential part of everything and one component, but it shouldn't be the top priority. It should be equal to but not above long-term public interests, which include the environment.

MRS. GAGNON: Good. I'm glad you clarified that, because maybe I was making it too extreme. Thank you.

MR. SHEEHAN: I kind of read through this quickly because I didn't want to take too much time.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: I take from your comments that you're fairly strongly in favour of many of the powers of the federal government that they currently are exercising through their spending authority or whatever . . .

MR. SHEEHAN: Or have and they're not exercising.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Well, I sort of even take from your comments that you're speaking about strengthening the federal role in the life of the country, perhaps at the expense of the provinces. I was going to ask you: how do we square the circle or reconcile that particular viewpoint with what I understand to be some of the negotiating positions of Quebec? They would like to see more powers exclusively exercised by the provinces, certainly by Quebec, and a lessening of the role of the federal government.

MR. SHEEHAN: I myself, and I think most people, don't have a problem with Quebec being able to guarantee that they can exercise their culture however they want to. You know, I don't see it as a problem providing all of us in the rest of Canada don't have to pay for it. I think if we're going to have a country and, as I mentioned, if we're going to have distinct societies, whether they be French or native cultures or whatever, you have to have a strong federal government to be able to ward off other interests. I believe it is going to be a difficult situation to accommodate or facilitate a change in the provincial/federal power-sharing mechanisms. Over the past years the provinces have slowly gained more and more power and consequently can place more pressure on the federal government to absolve themselves, in some cases with the federal government's willingness to do that. That's one of the agendas of the current federal government, but that's not in the long-term best interests of Canada.

I believe there are certain powers provinces should have, but when one province is affecting the interests of another, for example, the federal government should have jurisdiction in terms of transboundary waterways or impacts that will affect other parts of the country or the Earth. I haven't thought out every particular aspect of it, but I think a strong federal

government is essential. My concern is that currently many provincial governments have less stringent regulations than the federal government, so by giving powers of the federal government to provincial governments, the provincial governments, being in a weaker situation, eventually could be picked apart. I'm not saying it would happen today or tomorrow but over a period of time. Maybe given weaker governments in the provinces without the ability and expertise and resources at their disposal, the country would eventually cease to exist as we know it today.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Sheehan, for your presentation.

MR. SHEEHAN: You're welcome. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll call on Dorothy McCallum.

MRS. McCALLUM: I understand I have 15 minutes.

Ladies and gentlemen of the constitutional reform task force of Alberta, I am here tonight because I am very concerned about the future of my country and the role Alberta will play in this change. In this particular situation I do not come in a partisan capacity. My name is Dorothy McCallum. I'm 50 years old, a farm wife and sometimes substitute teacher. Other information I'd like to share with you is that I was a foster child and grew up in my earlier years in a predominantly French-speaking community and in my teenage years in a predominantly English environment.

Like most Canadians, I agonized over Meech Lake, Oka, and the Gulf war. Meech Lake turned my soul inside out. I think it brought into full view the very deep and sensitive problems we have in our country and still have not resolved. I don't think any one person can be blamed for the demise of Meech Lake. Clyde Wells and Elijah Harper acted as lightening rods for public sentiment. As governments, we're not listening to them. Here was an example of big boys in a back room deciding what was best for Canadians and trying to push the accord through regardless of public furor.

Oka and the stand our native people took to assert themselves as a people worthy of dignity was long overdue. I hope it never happens again. During that long, hot summer I had visions of civil war in Canada. What a legacy that would have been for Canadians. I'll ask you a personal question: if you had the choice to be born in any racial group, would you have chosen to be born Indian in Canada? If not, why not? Oka was about pride and dignity. Let's work fairly with our native groups and honestly strive to give them their rightful heritage. We owe them.

Canada's involvement in the Gulf war had an unreal quality about it. I couldn't believe that a so-called enlightened society would allow this to happen. We were back to fighting like kids in a school yard where the big bully comes out the winner. I'm glad we supported our troops, but I question the motives for the war. Were they economic ones, or was it really to establish a new world order?

The question that concerns me most today is the possibility that our country might break up into fragments brought about mainly by Quebec's threat to separate. Do we hang on to what we've got? Why should we? We can maybe strengthen our cultural heritages and become a more international country. After all, is what we've got worth preserving? Yes, it is. Yes, it is.

7:52

I think many Albertans want a united Canada but not to the detriment of the province. We want a strong Alberta too. Many westerners have long felt that Quebec has pulled muscle on the other provinces, and to add insult to injury, they impose learning of the French language. This sentiment is a reality. I can appreciate that even though I don't agree with it. Quebec is definitely significant and important historically. We need Quebec and we want Quebec. What we have is a war of words. If the will to stay together as a province is there, Quebec and the other provinces will have to agree on a word that is mutually acceptable to all parties without any loss of dignity.

My perception of Canada has always been in terms of the English and the French fact. To be truly Canadian you had to belong to one of these two groups. But another era was ushered in after Meech Lake. It wasn't just the English and the French anymore; it was all of us. It is important to recognize the many diverse cultures in Canada, particularly the native people, in this mosaic. This recognition of diverse cultures distinguishes us from other countries, but to survive as a country, we need to promote our Canadianism more.

In preparing for this presentation, I talked to several people, asking them what they thought about Canada and the Constitution. I was told they were not interested in politics or in politicians. I asked how as citizens we could make things better. They said, "Politicians just do what they want and do not listen." I sensed anger and a great deal of frustration in their answers. Today political, religious, and educational institutions as we knew them are crumbling around us. People are disillusioned. I do believe times will change. We have to come to terms with the fact that our leaders are not perfect. Leaders have to show they are working for the common good of all citizens. Most important of all, leaders have to have integrity, a characteristic we need to recognize and nurture. I believe the creation of a constituent assembly would address the needs of those citizens who distrust only government input and feel grass roots should be heard too. I believe in a triple E Senate, equal, elected, and effective.

I think that politically, as a province and a nation, we are too partisan, choosing to tear each other apart rather than trying to work together for our mutual benefit. The procedure Canada adopted in 1982 to amend our Constitution is a fair one, and we should keep it. Education can play a big role in bringing our country together by developing greater racial tolerance and leadership training. The media also has a role to play. It needs to develop a social conscience. We have to build a strong province and country, not take it apart. There's a lot of work to be done by all of us in this new Canada. Yes, we have to think about what it means to be a Canadian. There is a tug at my heartstrings when I think about the possible breakup of Canada as I know it, and I'm sure there are many who share this sentiment with me. I think it's time to return to simpler times when one's duties were to God, one's country, and treating one's fellow men with dignity.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Mrs. McCallum, for your heartfelt views. Did you get an opportunity to read this document, Alberta in a New Canada?

MRS. McCALLUM: Yes, I did.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We tried to pose in there the questions without giving answers. I hope you found it useful in terms of

trying to focus on what we are thinking of. I think you probably touched on a number of the questions we posed there.

MRS. McCALLUM: I tried to, but I decided to make this more of an idealistic presentation than a pragmatic one.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We appreciate that very much. Not everybody is a constitutional lawyer, and we don't want to try and turn everybody into a constitutional lawyer either, although by the time we're finished the process, maybe most Canadians will be. In any event, we appreciate your thoughts.

Questions or comments? Yolande.

MRS. GAGNON: Dorothy, I really appreciated your presentation. There's a lot of spirit there, and maybe we need more of that. I know you don't want to get into a lot of detail, but did you think at all of the constituent assembly and how one would arrive at choosing delegates? Who would it be accountable to, and would its findings be binding on anybody? You know, these are the questions we keep asking ourselves. How would you select people to attend a constituent assembly, first of all?

MRS. McCALLUM: If I were doing it and to find a solution, I think community leaders are often a good source, or citizens of good standing within a community. I think often by just going into communities, you can quickly find out who the ones are that people respect, their opinions and maybe how they live their lives. I think communities would be a good place. I also think that within political parties you get to know who the people are that would be fair and just in what they decided, maybe very good party members from various political parties.

MRS. GAGNON: Would these people be elected by the population at large or selected by political leaders, appointed by the Premier?

MRS. McCALLUM: Well, it depends on how you would use a constituent assembly, if it would be like a sounding board the politicians could tune into. In the case of Meech Lake, where a lot of people weren't being listened to, if we'd had a sounding board or if people had felt that maybe there was a place they could go to to air their grievances and people in power could listen to them – you know, if people out there were saying to this committee, "We're not happy with it" and there were a lot of people saying that, I think that definitely would have a bearing on what politicians do. It would certainly keep their ears to what the grass roots is saying.

MRS. GAGNON: So you would see the constituent assembly as an advisory group more than a group with binding recommendations.

MRS. McCALLUM: Yes, I would, more as an advisory group.

MRS. GAGNON: Okay, thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Barrie.

MR. CHIVERS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Dorothy, you mentioned several times in your presentation your concerns about the threat of Quebec to separate. You may not be aware, but we're going to be meeting in Calgary with Mr. Parizeau, the leader of the Parti Québécois. I for one fully expect he's going to convey a message somewhat along the lines: let my people

go. If you were able to be there, what would you say to Mr. Parizeau?

MRS. McCALLUM: I think it would be such a shame. I really feel torn, because I grew up in the French-Canadian culture and I really appreciate French people. They're a lovely people. I think if you look at the populace out there, the people like myself, they're really not into the political game or the media or even the papers. I'm sure there are a lot out there that really want to hold our country together.

When Meech Lake came along, I was so angry, because I was a westerner and I can appreciate how westerners feel. I live with them; I talk to them. You read the paper; you understand that. I got angry, and I kept saying: "Why should Quebec be a distinct society? We're all distinct. What makes one more distinct than the others?" Then I thought about it some more, and I think I'm past that now. I got past that somehow, and I thought: My goodness; if Canada breaks up, that's not the answer. We've got to come to a meeting of the minds with Quebec where they feel we appreciate them and they appreciate us too. We've got to start liking each other. I think that's what I would say. No, we don't want to give them up. I don't want to give them up, and I hope they don't want to give us up either. I mean, we're in it together. We're Canadians.

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MR. CHIVERS: Thank you.

MRS. McCALLUM: I'm sorry. I didn't mean to . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's quite all right. Nancy Betkowski would like to pose a question as well.

MS BETKOWSKI: It's really on the same line. I agree with you in many ways; what we have is a war of words. In fact, someone said that if we could find the language, we'd probably win the constitutional issue, because we could find the words that would be acceptable to Canadians. It's really following up on Barrie's question. If the cost of keeping Quebec in Canada is to give them a special status or recognize their distinctness, could you live with that?

MRS. McCALLUM: I think the one word is like a red flag to a bull, and that word is "distinct." It seems that if it's used, then you've got the last word type of thing, and that bothers me a bit.

MS BETKOWSKI: How do you feel about "special?"

MRS. McCALLUM: Yes, I think if it was a word that we could all accept. I think we all know that historically Quebec is very, very important and very special culturewise. I think if they could just find that one word that Quebec and Alberta agreed on, we'd be away. We need a lot of goodwill too, and maybe we should try to [inaudible] those people with a lot of goodwill and maybe be the majority for a change.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Gary Severtson has a question.

MR. SEVERTSON: One brief question, Dorothy. You mentioned your dislike of Meech Lake. Did that come after . . . Or you're upset with Meech Lake?

MRS. McCALLUM: I think in a way Meech Lake helped us to grow as a country, but it was upsetting, yes.

MR. SEVERTSON: But what I was saying was your dislike before the notwithstanding clause when they put the language law in Quebec, or after that? A lot of people confuse the Meech Lake agreement with the notwithstanding clause that Quebec . . .

MRS. McCALLUM: I'm talking about Meech Lake and Clyde Wells.

MR. SEVERTSON: Okay. I just wanted that clarified because of the last two weeks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. That's the last part of the process, I guess, that upset you. In June 1987 when Meech Lake was agreed to in Ottawa, we then came back and put it before our Legislature, introduced it, allowed it to stand over the summer until November, debated it then, and passed it. I don't think people were concerned about it then. It wasn't until, quite frankly, Mr. Bourassa used the notwithstanding clause to invoke the sign language law that a lot of people started to get angry about that and saw Meech Lake as the cause or the reason that Mr. Bourassa was able to do that. I don't know whether you fit into that category or whether it was the incident in June of last year in Ottawa where Clyde Wells was part of the process and so on that really got you upset.

MRS. McCALLUM: Actually, both those things upset me. The notwithstanding clause with the signs in Quebec, yes, that. I think as a westerner I feel that often Quebec likes to get away with a little bit more than it should, and maybe it should start co-operating with us too. It's a very thorny issue, I know, but I think that we've got to have a meeting of the minds and try to get along to keep our country together.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we'll try as legislators to work on your behalf to do that very thing.

MRS. McCALLUM: Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Patrick Adamson has indicated he'd like to come forward and give us some views. Patrick.

MR. ADAMSON: Thank you. Mr. Horsman and members here, I was thinking about this after supper tonight, and I have to admit that I never gave the thought to this that some of your previous speakers have given. I certainly never went into the details or the technical aspects of it, but there's one point perhaps I would like to get across in any event.

I think most Albertans and most Canadians could accept just about anything that happened providing it was done democratically. We can see what's happened in Europe and all over the world. If people don't have a chance to speak up and their will isn't carried out, then there are going to be repercussions for years. So I'll just go on that vein.

I have a few negative things to say, and I'll try to keep them out as much as I can, but if I am negative about anything, it's leading up to something else. It's very brief anyway. I appreciate you giving me this opportunity to say anything.

We can't base these decisions regarding our Constitution on sentimentality, in any case, but on sound practical reasoning. I've got no schematic plan of changing your government or anything else, but the point I'm trying to get across is that I don't think the democratic process has been used, and it hasn't

been used in this Meech Lake thing. It's the abuse, really, of the democratic process is the way I'm putting it, and I think it's hurt people more than we realize. We hope we don't have anything like Meech again.

I'll just read what I've said here.

I trust that present and future discussions will lead to a fairer and more democratic process in determining a much needed revised Constitution. I believe we have learned a lesson from Meech; namely, that we cannot leave this constitutional change process solely up to our governments, our MPs, or our bureaucrats. In fact, decisions of this magnitude should be turned over to an electorate through plebiscite and particularly the referendum. The words "constitutional assembly" have come up a lot here, and I agree with that. To add to what was previously said, I think it should be nonpartisan and it should be elected throughout the province, maybe with 10 or so members throughout the province so that our government and our people in power have something to work with and we know that it's truly a democratic process. Okay; that's the first point I want to get across.

Many of us, in fact the majority of Albertans and Canadians, have lost trust in our governments the way the First Ministers' Conference was handled, and we are particularly offended regarding the manipulation and strong-arm tactics that were used regarding this process. That's one of the negative things I have to say. We all know that, and it's repetition really. But because of the preceding events it also becomes apparent to me that we need a triple E Senate and a check and balance system against the overwhelming control of the lower House. There has been little regard for equality and for fair representation from western Canada.

Also stemming from the same type of control, I believe, many of our regional concerns are ignored; for example, bilingualism. I don't believe we are redneck or prejudiced because we feel that bilingualism was forced upon us. Most of us could accept federal bilingualism if we and our province had some input regarding how it was handled. It seems reasonable to accept in a federal sense where numbers warrant and as long as the provinces exercise some control. If Quebec Canada is making French their official language, Alberta and perhaps all of western Canada and perhaps the rest of Canada should make English the first official language.

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Regarding the distinct society, it's supposedly based on Quebec's special status in the Constitution and the concept of two founding nations. I think originally this was only applied to eastern Canada. Well, I don't even have too much trouble with that in itself, but the only problem is that we are now discussing special status for the native Indians and Metis. We should probably be considering the Ukrainians, Germans, Italians, Chinese, et cetera, who settled western Canada. Perhaps this group could be given special status as multicultural Canadians or western Canadians. I think we're perhaps best to try, as long as it's democratic . . . As long as it's democratic: that's the point I'm trying to get across. It has to be a democratic process, and it has to use the electorate in the province and throughout Canada. This is a very sensitive situation, and major divisions and separation of the country could result if this matter is handled without input from the electorate and the rest of Canada as well as Quebec. Once again, these decisions could be made through a constituent assembly, as previously suggested.

The constituent assembly would be responsible to government and to the electorate with a system of recall in case the members

were not representing the people, and that's what we have to be very careful about. It has to be a bona fide election process, I think.

I don't particularly think strong federal government is the answer without some kind of regional representation or provincial control, as a triple E Senate, because I think with the MPs in the east – and I think they're all good people. They're trying to do their job, as you are, but I think that they have more control and we have little to say sometimes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, thank you for coming forward. I appreciate your thoughts and your obviously strongly felt views about the future of the country.

The democratic process, of course, has been tried in a number of ways in the world. We've seen examples recently of the so-called democratic republics in eastern Europe and even in the Soviet Union collapsing. We all remember, I'm sure, the days when we'd hear the reports of the elections from the U.S.S.R., where 98 percent of the people voted and 97 percent of the people voted for one candidate, but that's because there was only one candidate. What we've tried in Canada has been based on the British parliamentary model and applied to the federal government and the provinces. We've seen other examples: in the United States, a republican form of government; across the world, attempts to get democracy.

The system that was in place before Meech Lake . . . I've said, you know, that Meech Lake is a dead horse, and there's no use flogging a dead horse, but it's useful to know why the horse died. I think we've been hearing loudly and clearly why the horse died, and now we've got to buy a new horse and get it running and working for the country. That's the dilemma we're facing.

MR. ADAMSON: Back to square one just about, it seems.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. Just about, in a sense.

But the purpose of this committee – and, by the way, we are a nonpartisan committee. We represent all the parties in the Legislature, and we've been getting along pretty well. We obviously have some difference of opinion from time to time, but the 16 members, and you have eight here tonight, are really, really, sincerely struggling to try and get the views of Albertans through this process and others we're going to be using. It's not easy, because we've been told – I'm repeating myself; my colleagues will be getting angry with me – that we don't need provinces, that all we need is one strong central government. But that's on one hand; on the other hand, we've been told, "Okay, western Canada, separate." Boy, there's a lot of territory between those two points of view.

MR. ADAMSON: I know. My mother-in-law used to say: convince a man against his will; he remains unconvinced and still. You know, you can't force any opinion on people. They have to believe in it, don't they?

MR. CHAIRMAN: And we're going to have to go by what the majority, a broad majority, view is. That's what we're trying to seek out from people like yourself across the province in the various communities we've been moving into. We very much appreciate your coming forward.

MR. ADAMSON: I appreciate you giving me this opportunity, especially on such short notice.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, that's what we wanted to do. Thank you very much.

MR. ADAMSON: Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 8:17 p.m.]

