

7:10 p.m.

Wednesday, September 25, 1991

[Chairman: Mr. Horsman]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to commence this evening's proceedings. Where is our secretary?

MS BARRETT: Je ne sais pas.

MR. McINNIS: I think he's booking another presenter.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, okay.

We would like to get under way. My name is Jim Horsman. I'm the member of the Legislature for Medicine Hat and the chairman of this select special committee considering constitutional reform. Most of you were here this afternoon, but for those of you who weren't, I'll have my colleagues each introduce themselves starting on my left.

MR. CHUMIR: Sheldon Chumir, MLA for Calgary-Buffalo.

MS BARRETT: Pam Barrett, MLA for Edmonton-Highlands. I think we'd probably all say the same thing: we just had the best food in the world right here in Hanna. It was a great meal we had.

MR. ROSTAD: Ken Rostad, MLA, Camrose.

MR. McINNIS: John McInnis, MLA, Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. DAY: Stockwell Day, Red Deer-North.

MR. SEVERTSON: Gary Severtson, Innisfail.

MR. CHAIRMAN: On my left is Garry Pocock, the secretary of our committee.

Lloyd Hutton and Claire Grover would like to make a joint presentation. Would you come forward, please?

MR. HUTTON: The small group of citizens that we appear on behalf of would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to make this little presentation to the members of the Select Special Committee on Constitutional Reform hearing. The interested citizens, as listed below, appear before this select special committee to convey to the Alberta Legislature our position on constitutional reform.

We endorse the principles put forth in an Alberta constitutional vision that constitutional reform should be to unite and strengthen the Canadian community. We believe that the vast majority of Canadians want the country to remain as one nation and to include all present cultures and societies. We believe that the first step should be to establish a Senate that is elected, with equal representation from each province, and effective enough to achieve fairness for all regions. We believe that step two should be to develop a reasonable constitutional amending formula which would require support by a large majority of the provinces representing a large percentage of the population.

It is not our intention to get into all the specifics of what constitutional changes there should be. However, we feel that all provinces should have equal constitutional status without undermining the present division of powers. All provinces should maintain control over their cultural and language issues, and Canada should continue to have two official languages. The

provinces should not be compelled to be bilingual, federal government services included.

A great many Canadians have never understood the reasons for Quebec not being part of the patriation in 1982, nor do we understand what it is they feel deprived of now compared with other citizens of the country. However, if we accept that in the end it will be the people of Quebec who will decide whether their future is within or outside Canada, then they should make their choice based on real facts instead of emotion. Those who are extolling the glories of sovereignty seem to rely solely on emotion in promoting their cause.

It is time for the federal government to develop two options so the people of Quebec can make an intelligent choice. Option one, being the one favoured by the majority of the rest of Canada, would see Quebec remain as a province within a newly structured Canada. Option two would see them as a sovereign, separate nation with all the responsibilities that go with it. In this option all of the cards should be on the table. They must know what happens with regard to public debt, federal properties within their borders, what the loss of equalization payments means to them, what the loss of all federal and cost-shared programs means to them, the impact of potential demands of native groups and other cultures within Quebec's present borders. Every economic consideration and assessment must be made and all of the responsibilities of being a sovereign nation must be examined. They must know what happens with regard to any other matters that would be affected by separation. Given good solid information, surely Quebecers will make a decision that's favourable to all of Canada.

Canadians cannot expect to achieve perfection in a Constitution overnight. We must remain considerate and objective to deal with matters as they affect the whole of our country.

Respectfully submitted by Abner Grover, retired civil servant; Claire Grover, retired businessman; Harry Gordon, rancher; Gordon Hunter, realtor; and myself, businessman. Endorsed by Alec Simpson, town manager, and Walter Smigg, our mayor.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Lloyd. I think you've outlined the two options that are facing us.

Others may have questions. Yes, Gary.

MR. SEVERTSON: One for clarification maybe. Did you say that you felt that, say, in what we call English Canada there would be no federal services in French and in Quebec there'd be federal services only in French?

MR. HUTTON: What we're saying is that we shouldn't necessarily have to supply services in French. I think that if you have enough people in an area that should require a service in French, then it would make good sense to offer it.

MR. SEVERTSON: Okay. The way I took it was that in English Canada there'd be no French service.

MR. HUTTON: No. We want to get rid of the compulsion that it be there.

MR. SEVERTSON: Okay.

One other question in reference to the Senate. Did you say you want it selected not elected?

MR. HUTTON: No. Elected.

MR. SEVERTSON: Okay. Sorry.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I was going to ask that question too. You want an elected Senate?

MR. HUTTON: Modeled after the triple E so the regions are properly looked after.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions?

MR. CHUMIR: You have a strong sensitivity for the nation obviously. I'm wondering whether the vision you and the members of your group have is one of having a strong federal government as well as a binding factor in the nation, or whether or not you're more inclined towards distributing powers to the provinces as Quebec wants.

MR. HUTTON: When we looked at the division of powers as they are now, we had trouble deciding how you could really change them any amount. We see the need for a strong federal government. As we looked at the division of powers that came out in this little booklet that I think the federal Members of Parliament probably distributed around the country to most of their constituents, the one that bothered us the most probably is the one on immigration, where we see that may be being balkanized by allowing the provinces perhaps too much say in that area. If you're going to take down the provincial barriers in other areas, how do you have provinces perhaps knocking heads over what type of people should be immigrating into the country?

MR. GROVER: Also, Sheldon, we advocate a strong central government but with a triple E Senate, and they must run together. Otherwise we have the same trouble we've had in the past.

MR. CHUMIR: I couldn't agree more.

I was wondering about one specific area that I've been asking about with some regularity, ad nauseam some might say. The present medicare and social services systems are established on the basis of the federal government setting out some general principles and providing some funding, and then the provinces actually running and administering the medical systems, hospitals, and making decisions re the exact type of social services they want. There are some who say that it is important to have a minimum standard from one end of the nation to the other as a sign of being a Canadian. There are others who say that the federal government shouldn't have a voice in it at all, that it should be taken over by the provinces and they should agree or disagree as they desire with respect to what the standards should be. What would your views be on that issue of whether you want the feds to be involved in those programs?

7:20

MR. HUTTON: Well, somehow or other we should maintain some uniformity across the country. If we are to do that, of course we would have to have minimum standards, so I guess it follows that the federal people should be very much involved in that area.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Stock, then John.

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, a couple of questions. I'm still not sure. You're talking about the federal government, and you mentioned the present situation. In looking at the booklet, Mr. Hutton, are you saying that other than immigration, which

you've mentioned, basically the status quo is more or less the way you see it?

MR. HUTTON: More or less.

MR. DAY: Okay. So you're not looking at major shifts, then, other than you did touch on the particular area of immigration.

MR. HUTTON: In the division of powers we weren't looking at a major shift.

MR. DAY: Okay. Thanks.

Also on the immigration one, with Quebec right now having, as some people would perceive it, more say in immigration matters than other provinces, would you want to see it stay that way, or do you feel that other provinces should have the same amount of say in immigration matters?

MR. HUTTON: Well, we've said that we see all the provinces having equal constitutional status, and I think that says it all. We think that you can't really extend powers to one province that you don't extend to others.

MR. McINNIS: The submission mentioned thinking about our options, about the possibility of the country breaking up, and you mentioned that people in Quebec should think about federal property within their boundaries. We've had a few people come forward and discuss what should happen with the national debt in that situation but not so much with federal properties. I guess we're more focused on debt than we are on our assets at the moment. Is there anything specific you had in mind? What were you thinking in terms of what message we should be conveying to Quebec about federal properties within their boundaries?

MR. HUTTON: Well, certainly the federal properties are an asset, and they belong to all of the Canadian people. We should be talking with them about the liabilities and the assets and the whole economic picture: what the ultimate outcome will be if they separate and what their position will be. I don't think you can make an intelligent choice unless you know what all the options are, what the facts are.

MR. McINNIS: Were there any specific assets or properties you had in mind?

MR. HUTTON: Well, in every province there are all sorts of federal facilities – federal buildings, federal land – that really belong to the country as a whole. These things should have a value placed on them so that we know how much of an asset they are to the Canadian people and, on the opposite hand, how much of a liability they would be to any province wishing to separate and keep them as an asset of theirs.

MR. McINNIS: So what you're saying is that these things should be discussed.

MR. HUTTON: That's right. They should be discussed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sheldon wants to come back in with a short question.

MR. CHUMIR: I think there's a very pertinent question that we asked earlier in the day of one individual, and I'd like your

response if we could. This individual who was in favour of equality for the provinces and as a result was opposed to conferring distinct society status on Quebec in a way which would give it unequal powers at the same time favoured the triple E Senate. The question is: would you be prepared to trade the triple E Senate for the distinct society, which would provide some form of inequality?

MR. HUTTON: Unless there's something about the term distinct society that runs deeper than what we hear in the document tabled yesterday, if it applies only to control of culture and language and civil law, it seems that they wouldn't be getting anything greater than what they've had for a number of years, going way back. On those terms it would be certainly acceptable to myself. If it were to diminish or decrease the rights of the individual which are enshrined in the Charter, then I think we would have an objection.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

On the triple E concept we've had a new proposal from the federal government, and it goes quite a long way to meeting the triple E concept. Of the three Es, elected is agreed upon. The method and all that we can obviously negotiate, how the Senators will be elected. The second one is the effective E, and they've gone quite a long way to continuing an effective role for the Senate in the federal Parliament.

Equality is the third E in the Alberta triple E concept. They've talked about a much more equitable Senate and asked that the parliamentary committee consider two models, one of which was set out by the Macdonald royal commission a few years ago and the other, which is total equality, set out by the Canada West Foundation. I think it's fair to say that the Macdonald royal commission was something along the lines of the Bundesrat in the German Parliament, which provides smaller numbers of Senators for the smaller components and somewhat larger numbers for a larger component. If push came to shove, would you recommend that we as a government support a modified equitable Senate or would you urge us to stick to our guns on the equal E?

MR. HUTTON: I think we would urge you to stick to your guns on the equal.

MR. GROVER: Also, Mr. Horsman, I don't agree with you entirely that they're presenting an effective Senate. I haven't read the document, but just from what I heard, in my opinion it's not as effective as it was. I mean, they've granted powers such as appointing the governor of the Bank of Canada, which is, to put it mildly, a big deal. I don't really know in what way they've given more powers to the Senate than what they had before.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm not suggesting that they've given more powers, but in many respects they've provided a much more effective Senate than we anticipated they might be coming forward with, and that's still open for negotiation. I want to make it absolutely clear that the effective E that they're proposing is not one that we've said we're going to agree to, but it is in many respects much more effective than we anticipated they would come forward with, quite a bit more.

MR. HUTTON: Sort of a good place to start.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. That's a good term: a good place to start. That term has been used a number of times in terms of people's comments. In any event, we'll listen to your advice about hanging tough on the equal E. Thank you.

Thank you both very much and your colleagues and friends that got together with you and thought this thing through. We appreciate very much that you've come forward.

MR. HUTTON: Thanks for the opportunity.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Johnsons are not able to come, but Brian Heidecker will come in their place.

MR. HEIDECKER: Is this name tag for you folks to read or for me to remember who I am?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. Turn it around so you can remember your name, Brian. That's what it's there for.

7:30

MR. HEIDECKER: Okay.

Thank you, members of the panel. My name is Brian Heidecker, and I'm from Coronation. I think what I'd like to discuss with you this evening is constitutional reform, and in that regard I'd like to focus on institutional reform. The two main institutions that are on the top of the list are the reform of the Senate and reform of the Bank of Canada. In response to your questions, I think two and a half Es is two and a half Es more than we had a few weeks ago, and if push comes to shove, let's take it before it disappears.

I think I would like to spend my allotted time with respect to reforms that have been proposed to the Bank of Canada. Just so that nobody's under any illusions, I am a director of the Bank of Canada. I'm the Alberta director and have been for the past six years. So I have seen the proposed changes prior to today. As a matter of fact, I think a lot of them might have even originated in this province.

I think what I would like to point out to you are some of the realities of the Bank of Canada and the impact of some of the recommendations that have been proposed. If one looks at the communiqué coming out of the recent Premiers' Conference, it said in essence: the Premiers are agreed that interest rates and our dollar are too high; the impact of these high interest rates and exchange rates on our economic competitiveness requires a greater provincial role in the formulation of monetary policy, and as such, the Bank of Canada should be reformed. I think I could add to that that generally speaking, when the Premiers are talking about reform of the Bank of Canada, they seem to focus mainly on the appointment of directors on a regional basis, and it seems to stop there.

I guess I would like to point out that there are a number of things that go on, and certainly communications to and from the Bank of Canada would not rate highly if one were to be marked by one's teacher or professor. I can assure you that there are some things that have been undertaken in recent months to improve upon that, but it seems that the public's opinion is that it's a people problem: the directors are not representing their regions, or the governor does not listen, and so on and so forth. I think this extreme focus on who has got their hands on the levers there is focusing in the wrong place. I think you have to back up one step and look at the mandate of the Bank of Canada, what sort of an institution it is – what is it designed to do; what is it intended to do? – and after you've looked at that,

then look at who has their hand on the lever.

I think if we were to look at the proposal that was put forward by the federal government yesterday, it goes a long ways to addressing the concerns of the provinces and certainly of many of the other federal institutions and citizens of the country.

The first thing they're proposing to do is open up the Bank of Canada and clearly identify what is the mandate – what is the organization supposed to do; what can it do? – and then proceed from there. I think I would recommend that you take a long, hard look at that when formulating your provincial position.

The second thing they want to do is in fact legislate what has been convention from day one of the Bank of Canada in 1936, and that is to put into the Act that the directors shall be appointed on a regional basis. That has been a fact since 1936, the origination of the bank, but it does not appear anywhere at all. So it's proposed to put that in. With respect to the directors, it's now proposed that the provincial and territorial governments will be consulted, names put forward, and then the process continue on from there. I think that certainly is an improvement over the current process.

Last but not least is the fact that the governor of the Bank of Canada is appointed for seven-year terms. In the future he would be subject to confirmation by the Senate, very similar to the U.S. situation, and that is a new spin that is being proposed here. But I think you need to step back and look into the current Bank of Canada Act to understand that the provinces would have considerably more influence on that than meets the eye. The Act currently gives the 12 outside directors – and they're allocated: two from Quebec, two from Ontario, and one from each of the other provinces – the power to set up a special committee for the sole purpose of recruiting and finding a new governor in consultation with the Finance minister. So if in fact the provinces have the opportunity to put the names of the directors forward in the first place and then the Senate being elected on a provincial basis – some form of triple E or something of that nature – I think this goes a long, long ways to giving the provinces considerably more influence in the policies of the bank and certainly in the people that are there.

So I guess what I'm saying is that I think you should give very strong consideration to supporting the proposals for the reform of the Bank of Canada as put forward in the paper.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. Well, it's very helpful to have a director of the Bank of Canada come and talk to us. Most people have never even seen one, let alone had the chance to talk to one.

MR. HEIDECKER: Thanks, Jim.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If you think politicians are remote from the people, how about the directors of the Bank of Canada? Not you, of course, Brian, but . . .

Any questions or comments from my colleagues? Yes.

MS BARRETT: Brian, I can't find it yet in the document, but I remember reading that . . .

MR. HEIDECKER: The top of page 33.

MS BARRETT: Okay. Thanks. Well, this guy helped write the document; he's got a real advantage here. Plus we've been in hearings.

MR. HEIDECKER: No. I didn't help write the document. I helped prepare the words.

MS BARRETT: Yeah; okay. All right. I found in here that there was a reference at any point to the Bank of Canada in this proposal needing to make inflation-fighting its primary goal. In other words . . .

MR. HEIDECKER: Price stability.

MS BARRETT: That was it: price stability. Yeah. Now, what do you think about having a specific mandate like that put right into the constitutional rules of the Bank of Canada?

MR. HEIDECKER: I think it's excellent.

MS BARRETT: You do, eh?

MR. HEIDECKER: Yes.

MS BARRETT: Why?

MR. HEIDECKER: Because I think that one of the problems we face on a continual basis is that everybody has an opinion as to what the bank should be doing. Little do they recognize that the bank's powers to do many of the things that they're suggesting are somewhere between nil and zero. If there's one industry that operates on a global basis and has operated on a global basis for many, many years, it's the financial industry and the central banking industry. When we sit down in a board meeting, we always start on the international scene and move back to the national scene and into the provincial scene. We never, ever start the other way around. It's just the nature of the business, and by putting in the Act very specifically that the bank is to deal with price stability, then that would get an awful lot of people off our backs and I think remove a lot of aspirations that people seem to think that central banks can do which, in fact, they cannot do.

I can get into a whole range of them, but exchange rates are the one . . . I mean, everybody wants the bank to move the exchange rate. Well, the ability of a central bank to affect the exchange rate is very, very limited.

MS BARRETT: I understand that. Well, maybe this is off target here, and if it is, maybe I'll talk to you privately at the end of the meeting. I make no secret about being very unhappy about what the Bank of Canada has been doing for a long time, and I don't just talk about the Mulroney government. I go back to when John Turner was Finance minister and what Gerald Bouey was doing. I am an economist, and I have some very, very hard feelings about this. Would you say to me that you are in agreement with their so-called price stability pursuits in the maintenance of interest rates at the level that they have been in the last few years?

MR. HEIDECKER: Yes.

MS BARRETT: You would. Okay. Maybe I'll visit with you afterwards, because I think we're going to go head to head over this one, but it's totally irrelevant to what we're mainly dealing with here.

MR. HEIDECKER: Oh, I can sense a good debate. You're going to lose though.

MS BARRETT: I don't know.

MR. CHAIRMAN: In any event, I appreciate that.

John, did you wish to get in too?

MR. McINNIS: I'm on the same point to some degree. It seems to me that when we talk about putting price stability into the Act, the Act you're talking about is the Constitution of Canada not the Bank of Canada Act.

MR. HEIDECKER: No. The proposal in the constitutional proposal is to amend the preamble to the Bank of Canada Act to clearly lay out and clearly identify that the purpose of the bank is price stability. There is a very long-winded preamble to the Act which confuses everybody, and as a result of that, a lot of people seem to think that the central bank has power to do a lot of things and responsibility to do a lot of things that they simply do not.

7:40

MR. McINNIS: So this has nothing to do with the Constitution of Canada; this is purely a statute of the federal Parliament.

MR. HEIDECKER: That's right, but it is part and parcel of the constitutional proposal. As Albertans we've had an awful lot to say with respect to Bank of Canada policies, as have other provinces, and this is one of the few opportunities we will have to have influence on it and, more importantly, to put a stronger measure of influence with the provincial governments and the regions.

MR. McINNIS: Well, it seems to me that what's being suggested is essentially the monetary policy of the present government becoming the *raison d'être* of the Bank of Canada. I sense that you want to argue that point, and I'll certainly give you the chance to do that, but the monetary policy that's been pursued, which is essentially keeping Canadian interest rates that much higher than the American market, has been pursued because of a desire for price stability. I can't quarrel with their right to do that so long as it's in a statute that might be changed if the government changed, but if the proposal was to put that in the Constitution of the country, then I think we would have a major quarrel.

MR. HEIDECKER: No.

MR. McINNIS: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Stock.

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, to Brian. Maybe the question is more on mechanics than anything, Brian. To help my understanding and maybe the folks in the room here, when you say that you're Alberta's representative or coming from the region of Alberta as a director – and I'm not saying this to again encourage debate; it's an honest mechanical question – how do you as an Alberta representative reconcile the fact that when the government of Alberta is not in agreement with a higher interest rate policy, as it has been over the last couple of years, yet you say that you endorse it? Are you there to represent the views of Albertans or are you there to represent the view of the bank or . . . Just kind of help us with that – understanding your role, I guess – just so you don't knock too many heads on the way out of here.

MR. HEIDECKER: Okay. No. What one does when you're working on a board of directors on that, you put your best foot forward, you put your best argument forward. At the end of the discussion a decision is made. If you want to continue working with that group, you cannot simply be running around and saying, "Well, I agreed with them this day, but on this particular day I didn't." I think that as a director, you put the best information forward, and secondly, you try to go back and explain in the province. I have done that to a far greater degree than any of my predecessors. I organize a meeting in Calgary and a meeting in Edmonton each year where we access upwards of 300 people and we try to explain what's going on. It's a very, very difficult and very contentious issue, but when I say that I am in agreement, I'm in basic agreement with the direction; I totally disagree with the level. As a matter of fact, Mr. Crow just said, "Well, I know where you're at, so I sometimes I don't have to bother asking you because you're on the suggestion that the rates should be lower." That is, I guess, a long-winded answer to a very contentious and difficult issue.

MR. CHUMIR: I think you've just made the point that one can disagree with the level of interest rates and what is the appropriate mechanism and still agree that the central bank should be protecting price stability. I must say that although I'm a noneconomist, all my common sense tells me that's exactly what the central bank should be doing. I think that's what the German Bundesbank does. But with that might I ask: in terms of being an Alberta director, how are the appointments made at the present time and what types of qualification would one be seeking?

MR. HEIDECKER: Well, the process is an order in council appointment. What qualifications do we have? The Act states that the outside directors shall be qualified individuals from a diverse group of backgrounds. I am the first and the only farmer ever to be on the board of the Bank of Canada. We have individuals from a wide, wide range of occupations: tax lawyers through real estate developers, business people of various sorts, labour representatives from time to time. What it is is a typical corporate board. We run a very large corporation: we have 2,600 employees; we have a \$200 million a year operating budget; we had a \$2.4 billion profit last year. We're running a very large corporation, so we want a very extensive network of contacts throughout the country, and we are the eyes and the ears of the bank within our respective communities. We report in as to what's going on in our provinces. We comment on what impact policies may or may not have and a lot of the intangibles. I mean, in terms of statistics, we've got statistics coming out our ears. We help a lot in the interpretation of those statistics. So there are no set qualifications other than that you need to be open, receptive, and able to think.

MS BARRETT: How frequently do you meet?

MR. HEIDECKER: The board meets nine or 10 times a year. We've had a number of reforms in recent months, and the full executive meets one time in between each board meeting. In addition to that, the Act requires that there be an executive meeting each Friday that the board is not convened. On the remaining Fridays one member of the executive meets with the governor or the senior deputy governor and the Deputy Minister of Finance. So there's an awful lot of input.

MR. CHUMIR: Would you happen to know offhand: how does the United States get their regional representation on the federal reserve board? I know they do have it in some way.

MR. HEIDECKER: Yes. The federal reserve system in the U.S. is split into 12 districts. It's very difficult to make direct comparisons between the Canadian system and the U.S. system because the district reserve banks' principal business is the clearing of cheques. They have something in the order of 16,000 banks in the States. Interstate banking is not allowed. So here where you write out a cheque on the Bank of Commerce in Vancouver payable to somebody in Halifax, it clears through the internal system. In the U.S. that's not the case. So their principal function is to clear cheques and also to process notes. Just to give you an example, we will process 7,000 tonnes of paper notes this year within our system in Canada, so if you multiply that tenfold for the U.S., you'll get some magnitude of the industrial side of the operation.

However, their system is that they have presidents and chairmen of the district reserve banks who come together on the federal reserve board. They have what is called an open-market committee whereby five of the 12 presidents are voting members of the committee; the other seven get to watch. They meet approximately eight times a year in setting up their policies. So it's really not all that different than our board, but they do have a good information disseminating system there. The rap on the district federal reserve board – surprise, surprise – is that they spend all their time peddling the Washington line out in the regions. So it's not without its comments also.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Brian. I'm sure we're all familiar in this part of the country about the early farming days when the farmer taking his wagonload of grain to the elevator found himself in a terrible rainstorm. His axle broke on his wagon, and as he was trying to fix it, his team ran away in the midst of this terrible lightning and thunderstorm and hail. As soon as the team ran away, he looked up in the sky and said, "Goddamn the CPR." Nowadays what we say is, "Goddamn the Bank of Canada." So you've become the lightning rod in some respects for concerns, but we do appreciate your coming forward and giving us your views and your insight. Thank you.

MR. HEIDECKER: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Don Brinton. Good evening.

MR. BRINTON: Hon. members, going from the director of the bank to your average local citizen, my background is: I live in Hanna; I work in the area of technology. I've worked in other parts of Canada, and I've worked with international companies, national companies, and now a provincial company. I have a small report that I have made up. I'll be reading through it and explaining my views at the time. Of course, being an individual I have the luxury of being quite direct in my ideas, and certainly in government you have the press hounding you. Some of my views are very direct. I promise to make my concerns direct and brief. If for nothing else, as with most average working middle-class citizens, I have limited time to dwell on this.

7:50

It is not that the subject of Canada's direction is a low priority, but I do believe the various governments of our country fail to realize that most of us are still fighting for some form of survival. We may have the house and belongings associated with

the good living, but that is a result of the credit and loan systems available. Like never before both the wife and husband must have good but busy careers and life-styles to support our life. I'm sure I speak for the average person in Canada when I say that it is hard to understand why we have such a crisis in Canada when we are too busy to pay much attention to all this. We are either hounding ourselves with the competitiveness at work and trying to keep up with the computers or just trying to get the golf score down. It is no wonder that characters in soap operas have so many problems: they never work and they have too much money.

I'm not being rednecked; like the average person, I am honest. Most of our problems seem petty compared to the real world problems, like debt and competitiveness in this ever-changing business world. What I'm really referring to is the fact that in my travels across Canada, including Quebec, and my contact with fellow people in my situation I think there's quite a common bond which is unbreakable, and to me it seems the press and the regional governments have created more of an isolation than the actual local citizens would like to feel out. Most of them are still dealing with their business problems, and they're dealing with their home problems.

The Meech Lake accord should have been relocated in New Orleans. I say this because it is a small area with traditional French and Spanish – Creoles – which resembles Quebec; Cajun, which resembles our east coast; and wealthy Americans, which resembles Ontario or perhaps Alberta. In addition to this, there is the black issue. Yet this area is very prosperous and very proud of its culture. That's a kind of humorous side of things. I happen to have just come back from a vacation there, and it really impressed me that such a small area could abide. Perhaps it's because we have the luxury of too much geography, but we seem to want to isolate.

I would like to grant Quebec its right to cultural sovereignty, but every relationship has to be a win-win situation, and every province must be granted the same rights. Albertans are at a disadvantage when seeking a career with such entities as the federal government because the vast majority of Albertans find it very difficult to acquire the French language fluently. Like many of us, I have taken high school French and even followed it up with a night course. I don't use it enough to have polished it up, and I have been at a disadvantage when I've worked with every national company I've been involved with. I'm not allowed to do business with Quebec; the companies I've dealt with insist that any interfacing be done in French. I have no qualms with that, but if this is the shape of the future, then Alberta has put its business and employment in a disadvantage until we develop bilingual people, and either we re-engineer our relationship with the federal government to protect our access to it or we re-engineer our educational system to develop people who are truly bilingual. The latter might be more beneficial. It would mean all schooling would be bilingual from kindergarten up instead of just having French courses.

Provincially we don't need bilingualism. I find that with the technical companies I've dealt with internationally, English is a very standard language in Europe and other areas. If the current agenda on the Constitution goes ahead with the ideas towards Quebec and the federal government, its outlook towards bilingualism, I believe that Alberta's citizens are at a disadvantage politically and otherwise to access our democratic system, our government, because we're not properly brought up with bilingualism unless we have a French background. I think most of us are in that situation. I know where I grew up, in Vegreville, Don Mazankowski was our MP, and I don't believe

Don has yet acquired the French language, which puts him at a disadvantage.

The Charter of Rights should apply between governments and individuals, and the notwithstanding clause should be revoked. I believe there is no reason for any government to override a basic charter of human rights. I also believe that our social systems should remain standardized across Canada, as they are now. It encourages people at work to feel comfortable about moving around Canada.

Along the same lines, I do not believe it is in the best interests of Canada to remain in the British Commonwealth. We are not British; we are Canadians. I want all Canadians of all backgrounds to acknowledge this new world as Canadian. I do not want them feeling any different because they are not of British descent. Perhaps it's part of the problem. I myself do not associate myself as British even though I am of British descent. I would prefer to be thought of as Canadian, and I think that is a healthier outlook for everybody, including our Quebecois.

If Quebec does insist on special privileges which put other provinces and groups at an unfair advantage economically or politically, or if Quebec simply chooses to bow out, then a regional economic association would be best. I do not believe it would be a drastic step. We should still maintain mobility and a common economic bond, such as Europe has focused on. Most of us would not really notice the difference except for the squawks from the federal bureaucrats. I simply do not feel we should be held hostage to other groups' threats. If some sort of separation is what they wish, then we should plan for it and work it out. Of course, this means breakdowns of all sorts in our federal systems. We would need an EEC-style system to sort out such concerns as agriculture and transportation.

Concerning the native issues, it is unfortunate the natives were not involved or burdened with the responsibilities of governing this nation earlier. The reason, of course, is that they operated a primitive society. They did not populate the land as European natives did, so they did not develop such advanced systems of society. Most Canadians do dream of getting back to nature and have also quested for the roots of their background. I believe that the North American natives are not alone in their interests, but we can't, nor can they, hang on if they wish to have any part of the future world.

I would like to settle their land claims that they have, based on the archaic treaties, once and for all, but I would also like them to be proud and responsible Canadians. Unfortunately, issues such as this one are too hot for the government to handle properly because of publicity, and perhaps some sort of plebiscite involving public opinion or whatever would be better. It is a mess that can only get worse. The current federal government offer, which just recently came out, to allow them part of the government, has not even been fully explained, and Elijah Harper has already condemned it. His point of view concerning what Quebec is trying for and what the natives will receive is understandable, but he is fighting a geographical battle. The natives are not a unified province or voice. They have not blended into the Canadian mosaic like most of us would like them to do, but they have not unified and presented themselves properly. I don't think any of us really know how to handle the native issue. The idea of offering them several seats in the House, in the government or whatever, is still – I have not heard anybody work it out.

The Senate is no longer useful and should be abandoned. It was once necessary because democracy is weak during a country's infancy and when the general public are misinformed and uneducated. The House of sober second thought was

necessary then. The GST fiasco in 1990 proved the Senate is useless for that part of its purpose. The research or whatever else they do can surely be handled without them. If we had a triple E Senate, the government would not be able to operate. It would be very difficult to pass anything through both Houses. I understand the idea of a triple E Senate bringing more of a voice from the areas which are unpopulated, including Alberta, compared to Ontario, but I can't see anything moving through government efficiently with both Houses operating like that.

I am pleased that the Alberta government has opened itself for input from the public. It encourages the general public to ponder the situation. On the other hand, politicians do have a tendency to become overdramatic with such issues because that is their job. This is not different from any other relationship, personal or otherwise, which is always growing. If we look at the Soviet republics at this time, we can see some of the problems of a separate Quebec. Yugoslavia and Georgia thought they had accomplished something with their independence until their smaller groups started to voice their discontent. We've got to work together towards the big picture, but the key word is "together." The big picture should not be under the control of one of the smaller groups.

Thank you for your time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Don, for your presentation and for the thought you put into it.

Just one point you made in your last paragraph. I can assure you that none of us around the table want to overdramatize this issue because it's our job. I think we all recognize the point that you made in your first paragraph or two, and that is that the real concerns of the average citizen are economic and related to job opportunities and the ability to raise their families and so on. Most of us feel that should be the job governments are striving to do rather than to engage in endless rounds of constitutional discussion. You make a good point, but I just wanted to assure you, though, that we have to do it whether we like it or not.

8:00

MR. BRINTON: Actually, at the provincial level I don't think there is that sort of feeling. I just find that in federal politics, partly perhaps the press itself. When the Meech Lake accord was going on, there were times almost beyond reason. It was almost too hot to handle.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. That week in June when everybody should have been out gardening or playing golf or something, they were watching television.

Yes, John.

MR. McINNIS: Don, you mentioned New Orleans as an example of a multicultural society that appears to work in the sense that they're harmonious, fairly prosperous. I wondered – not having been to New Orleans; I'd certainly like to go there sometime – if you came away with any impression of where we might have gone wrong, or if there's some insight you may have gained, further to what you've said already, in your travels that might help us out.

MR. BRINTON: Well, that's a good question. If you look at the history of their area, they have gone through the problems that perhaps we've gone through with the black issue. From what I understood, when the Cajuns first arrived, they were not accepted by the original French. Perhaps they've already gone through all their growing pains. I myself just feel that what

they've achieved right now is a strong sense of pride in their culture, and perhaps it's that there's no real dominance from any group. The government is a noncoloured identity, whereas in our country we tend to almost perceive the government as being more of an English government and Quebec as being a separate entity.

I just feel that the different people I've met from different cultures all presented themselves as American and that this is their country. That's why I also feel that the idea of being connected to the British Commonwealth, when you look at a country like Canada, which is so diverse, is almost outdated. It itself to me presents the wrong impression to people. That perhaps is the one thing I did learn from there: that we can no longer just be a part of the British Commonwealth. We are a country that's diverse.

MR. McINNIS: Just to kind of shift the ground ever so slightly, you'd probably say that New Orleans is a very distinctive type of culture. Did you have a position on the use of a distinct society clause in our Constitution dealing with Quebec?

MR. BRINTON: Well, as I understand it, I'm willing to accept it, but I also believe it shouldn't entitle them to privileges above others. I do believe that every province in a sense is a distinct society. From my experience in the maritimes, I think they are. The cultural aspects: I accept them, but I had a problem when they were forcing, for example, advertising to be French only. To me that bridged the basic Charter of Rights.

MR. McINNIS: Although I would say, with respect, that's probably near the core of the issue; the ability of the Quebec government to legislate the sign law I think is at the core of the distinct society debate.

MR. BRINTON: Right. In that sense I do have a problem with it, because I think it is breaking down the mobility of people to move around Canada. I think culture should naturally grow, and it shouldn't have to be forced. I think they fail to recognize that most of us already realize it's a distinct society, and I don't think it's anybody's wish to discriminate against them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sheldon.

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you. Don, I appreciate your sense of public responsibility in coming forward with your presentation. You noted that you believe the social system should be the same or similar across the country because it encourages mobility. We're wrestling with different visions of the country. I'm wondering whether or not you would be in favour of a strong central government which would have some role as the catalyst. When you say they're the same, there are different ways of getting the similarity. Would you prefer to have the federal government in there setting some standards for medicare and social services, or do you feel these should be shifted to the provincial level and decentralized to some extent?

MR. BRINTON: Well, I would like to see Canada, first off, remain together. If such, I do believe prosperity should be shared, including health systems. I believe that we want to encourage national unity with free trade. We want to break down the provincial barriers with businesses, and we want someone to feel encouraged to start a business up wherever they wish in Canada, wherever it's prosperous or advantageous for them. I do believe that having more of a common medicare

system or whatever is in the best interests of our families as they spread out across Canada.

MR. CHUMIR: Should this be accomplished through federal government standards? Or do you subscribe to the theory: let's get the provinces doing these things; that is, decentralized to some extent?

MR. BRINTON: I'm not really sure what would be best. I hate to build up a gigantic federal system, but at the same time I think it is better handled at a federal level.

MR. CHUMIR: Sure. Perhaps I'd just intercede to say that the system now is that basic principles are established by the federal government with some funding. It's all operated now by the provinces, and that would continue. No one has suggested that would change. The real issue is whether the federal government will be forced out of the few principles that it establishes. That's where the battleground is.

MR. BRINTON: Okay. I actually am not really in favour of that. I would like to see the federal government still maintain that part of it.

MR. CHUMIR: Okay.

Would it be possible just to ask one other thing? You tantalizingly raised some clouds or raised some question with respect to the way we're approaching the native Indian issue. I'm wondering if perhaps you might elaborate on your concerns in that regard.

MR. BRINTON: Actually, it's not so much the way you're handling it; it's the way it's being handled in general. I don't think anyone in North America knows really how to handle it. From my knowledge, it hasn't really come up in the United States as much as Canada. In Canada it's, I think, a very hot issue everywhere. I've listened to all sorts of programs, to Peter Gzowski and everybody else, and I find that no one really has an idea of how to handle it other than to keep giving and giving and giving. My view is that in today's world that is growing, we can't be leaving people behind as we've left the natives behind. We left them behind from day one. We never involved them in our system. I find we have to bring them up to speed somehow. One of the good things, I believe, in the provincial government: we offer all sorts of education incentives and ideas like that. I don't know what else we can do, but I'm not in favour of just giving. I'd like to see them become more responsible and catch up to the times.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Stock Day. Gary Severtson.

MR. DAY: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Don, just as an aside. I haven't been in New Orleans, but I don't dispute what you saw down there and your appreciation for the life that was being lived down there. I'm always excited, I guess, by the fact that a group of people as diverse as those people down in that particular state can live and apparently be happy with no social charter, with no federal minimum standards in their social programs, no health care system, yet they do seem to be fairly happy people. I'm always intrigued by that. The Cajuns, of course, - Cajun being a slang word for Acadian - originally from the maritimes, getting booted out and moving down there: even they seem to be a happy people down there. I'm not quite as skillful as Sheldon in manoeuvring a witness to my position,

so I just want to be blunt with you. I want you to help me understand something, because I honestly struggle with it. As legislators we're going to have to take this pool of thought we're getting from Albertans and try to say what the Alberta consensus is on any number of issues, so help me understand the question which Sheldon often approaches: provincial governments versus a strong federal government, centralization versus decentralization.

You mentioned that we don't need bilingualism but that it's a fact, it's there, and we should work towards it. We recognize that most Albertans, most Canadians seem to have a problem with official bilingualism, which is a federal creation. You talked about the fact that we in Canada like to isolate ourselves in ethnic groups, and unfortunately that seems to happen. That flows from a federal policy of multiculturalism which provinces have dutifully followed. You talked about squawks from federal bureaucrats if we try and move in a certain direction. You mentioned the native Indian situation; there's probably not a more colossal, dismal failure in that whole area – social life, education, everything else – and it's been entirely the feds handling that. Of course, the federal debt that we've got is of immense proportions.

So in light of the string of what many of us identify as major national policy disasters, where do people then get faith in the federal government controlling us? I'm asking that sincerely, struggling with how we approach this.

8:10

MR. BRINTON: I understand what you're saying. I kind of went back and forth, because the future of Canada seems to hinge a lot on what Quebec is planning. If we did go to a more regional system, we definitely would be withdrawing from the federal government. In the meantime, if Quebec stays in and we work this whole thing out, I still see the federal government as being a very large power base. If we were to withdraw a lot of that power regarding native issues and everything else, I think we would still have to have a lot of contact through first ministers or whatever to ensure that there is some sort of standard, because of course it could create quite an imbalance, I think, if one province did this with a native issue or whatever and another one did that. I'm not sure. Is that what you were more or less questioning? Should we withdraw from the government and handle the native issues and everything purely ourselves?

MR. DAY: No, no. In light of what most Canadians see as problems – some see them as federal policy disasters, which I've mentioned – some people still ask that it be the feds that have the hammer, as it were, over the provinces. Just let me simplify it. The way things are now, Don, are you more or less satisfied with the status quo in terms of division of powers, or do you think there needs to be a major shift either to the federal government or to the provincial governments? Are you more or less satisfied with the status quo?

MR. BRINTON: Yes, I am more or less satisfied with the status quo. I am not that satisfied with our federal government in a lot of aspects, but I do understand the situation they're in. Our debt and everything is something that has been carrying on for decades. But I am quite satisfied. I don't really see it working any better in other ways, especially with the international world and the way the business world is going in an international sense. I still believe the division of power is best where it is.

MR. DAY: Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pam Barrett.
I'm sorry, Gary.

MR. SEVERTSON: Go ahead, Pam.

MS BARRETT: Don, did you read any newspaper coverage today of the proposals from yesterday's document tabled in the House?

MR. BRINTON: I did scan through it.

MS BARRETT: Okay; good. I think you referred to this sort of free trade between provinces and were supportive of it. The section in which that is proposed talks about a whole lot of other stuff that I've been wont to call applehood and mother pie in the past, but the one thing I find missing is a balancing commitment. The only reason I thought about it is because you were saying: jeez, we need social programs, the basic stuff, as a federally directed series of programs in order to ensure mobility. Do you have a problem with the fact that there's no reference to that in these proposed changes? In other words, there's the recognition that they want the free flow of people, goods, services, and capital throughout Canada but no counterbalancing in terms of a commitment in the Constitution to basic social programs. Does that sit easy with you?

MR. BRINTON: No, it doesn't, and I have not understood it as well as you have.

MS BARRETT: That's why. Yeah.

MR. BRINTON: No, I'm not happy with that. There are a lot of problems in general, I think, even in business. With inter-provincial barriers breaking down, I can see some business going east. On the other hand, with Alberta's energy rates and everything else, it is very enticing for business to come here, so I can see us benefitting. But if that's what they're reading into it, I don't agree with it. I've encountered a lot of families who have more or less been forced into moving. It's a big enough country and there's enough isolation. It's difficult enough without having to face changes in social systems.

MS BARRETT: Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Don. I hope you don't feel you've had philosophical armies marching over and across your body and back again in this exchange.

MR. SEVERTSON: Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry, Gary.

MR. SEVERTSON: I'm having a hard time getting to ask a question tonight, Don.

You're one of the few who mentioned that we should abolish the Senate. I would say just off the top of my head that the majority of Albertans coming before us more or less agree with the triple E Senate. Is it because you feel the effective part would just hamstring the House of Commons? Or if we could define the effectiveness of the Senate in maybe having veto powers on matters that have provincial concerns and suspensive powers on federal matters, would you be in favour of a Senate

like that so it wouldn't hold up the House of Commons completely? An example of provincial matters would be the NEP. A lot of people feel that if we'd had an triple E Senate at the time, that program never would have been passed. Or would you still rather see the suspension of the Senate altogether?

MR. BRINTON: I understand what you're saying. I think there has been a history, especially with the NEP, of a lot of hard feelings from Albertans regarding federal policies or what they've done. Unfortunately the Senate itself is an expensive entity, and I guess I have a hard time seeing it developing into becoming effective. The triple E is definitely a vast improvement over what is there right now, and perhaps it would work. My opinion is that it would slow government down a lot, and to me that's expensive. But I understand what you're saying; there is that aspect of it. If it works as a good filter to prevent unfair policies like that, then it would probably be worth it. My ideas on abolishing the Senate mainly are that I couldn't see it effectively filtering that without slowing the government and just becoming a burden.

MR. SEVERTSON: I agree with you the way the Senate is now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, Don, that's an interesting point. Of course, those of us in our Legislature have unanimously endorsed a reformed Senate with a triple E concept. It's been the result of a long period of public hearings and public debate and so on with the concern in mind that without some balancing body, Ontario and Quebec would always make all the laws for Canada because of the numbers they have in the House of Commons. That's the underlying concern about achieving some fairness and equity and regional balance in decision-making at the centre.

We appreciate your interest and concern and thank you very much for coming this evening.

MR. BRINTON: Thank you.

8:20

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank all of you for attending. Don was our last presenter.

MR. POCOCK: We've got one more.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, I'm sorry.

MR. STORCH: I do not have the prerequisite piece of folded yellow paper.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And nobody told me you were going to . . .

MR. POCOCK: I don't think we were aware that you wanted to make a presentation.

MR. STORCH: Oh, I'm sorry. That's fine. I don't really need the piece of cardboard. I can do without it, thanks.

My name is Norman Storch. I'm a farmer from the Hanna area. As I mentioned, I don't have the piece of cardboard, so if you forget my name, I do answer to "Hey you." That's what I get around home most of the time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, Norman, we had asked people to fill out a form as they came in. Perhaps you didn't get that.

MR. STORCH: I think I did fill out the form.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. We must have run out of yellow paper.

MR. STORCH: I guess that's what it is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Carry on.

MR. STORCH: My presentation will be very brief. I have been getting most of my news on the constitutional debate that's been taking place in the country over the last while, particularly over the last couple of days, from Peter Gzowski over the radio in the tractor. I would have to say initially that I am a strong nationalist. To me that means believing in a strong Canada. I believe, as we seem to continually say, that our regional and cultural diversities should strengthen us, not weaken us. Of course, that's easier said than done. If in our wisdom we could somehow find a way to legislate common sense and fairness, I don't think we would be in many of the problems in this country we are in.

Just a couple of comments on process. I think the whole constitutional debate will continue to evolve and unfold over the next while. There's talk again of more committees going back and forth across the country to talk about the issue, and I suppose ultimately the only way to really solve the issue is to continue to communicate. I have a couple of concerns and cautions for the government, for the Legislature of the province of Alberta. I would suggest that this is not the time for any sort of brinkmanship. We've seen the federal government back off from its rolling of the dice and Meech Lake behind closed doors to the more open process that we're into now, and I really believe that any sort of brinkmanship, any sort of bluster would not serve Canada well at this point. I believe this whole issue of constitutional reform ultimately only makes a difference in the context of Canada remaining together. If Canada separates somehow, of course constitutions suddenly don't matter any more; we're back to square one.

In my involvement with a number of national farm organizations and knowing a number of farmers in Quebec, really what they want to hear is that the rest of Canada wants them. I found this analogy of Canada and New Orleans interesting, because one of the very significant differences, of course, is geography. We have in the U.S. a diverse population in a very small area, and you really don't have much choice but to get along over a period of time. Here in Canada we have the geography to deal with. One of the things we haven't really thought about is that maybe we need a German province and a Polish province and a French province; perhaps bringing those cultural strengths to each one of the particular regions would strengthen our country. Every culture has strengths. Every ethnic origin has particular strengths to bring forward.

So no brinkmanship, no bluster. I know that the people I talk to in Quebec want to hear Canada say that we want them to remain part of Canada. Maybe if we could just have a big collective hug, we could sort of get past this process, but we don't seem to be able to do that.

The other bit of process I'm hearing is this business about forming a federal council. I guess I'm a little concerned about that. I don't think any Canadian wants another level of bureaucracy. In the paper Mr. Mulroney brought forth, I don't know what he put in there to give away. Perhaps the federal council is one of the things he put in to trade off or whatever. An effective Senate would essentially give us a federal council, so no

federal council. Gosh, we don't need another level of bureaucracy. If government in the large sense is going to appear reasonable in the eyes of the average Canadian, develop the processes we have now and make them more effective. We don't need another federal council. It's just more legalities and loopholes and more time and effort to be spent by lawyers and other people involved in that process, and we don't really need that.

I find it very interesting that Canada has the opportunity and the luxury to be involved in this ongoing discussion on the Constitution, this eternal navel gazing. The rest of the world is coming together, even eastern Europe. The Soviet parliament, when it appeared it was going to break up, disintegrate into all the various regions, determined at the last moment that because of economics the Soviet deputies had to stick together. Canada without Quebec and Quebec without the rest of Canada are weaker. Whether they could go it on their own or whether we could go it on our own doesn't really make any difference. It doesn't matter how you add it up. Ultimately Canada is weaker, and in this very competitive economic climate we are in today, we simply don't have that luxury.

This whole discussion started in a significant way 10 to 15 years ago. Those were very good economic times all across the country. We had more money than we could spend. We don't have that luxury today. It's a different climate. The fellow that presented before me was talking about the average Canadian worrying about things that matter to him and his family. I think that's really true. I think we have less of the luxury of time and of talking about the Constitution and talking about how we want the country to progress when in fact the regional economies are under some particular pressure. I wonder if people in the city of Montreal are as keen on separating from Canada now as they were when their economy was stronger. It's a different atmosphere, and we need to get on with the business of running the country. The Constitution is important, yes, but we also need to get on with the business of running the country.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much for your caution to us. I think the committee has been approaching its work in a pretty calm manner, and we haven't engaged in too many philosophical or ideological disputes, at least not in public, except on the floor of the Legislature from time to time. We appreciate your caution that we not aggravate the situation in the country, and that's certainly not our intention.

Since you mentioned Peter Gzowski, you've had the advantage or otherwise of listening to him and his program, but I don't know how much awareness there is on the part of Mr. Gzowski about the existence of provincial reviews of our constitutional process. They are taking place in every province. Much attention seems to have been paid to the federal process to the exclusion of what's happening at the provincial level, particularly as reported in the national news media. I think what we're doing, though, is absolutely essential so that we as a participant in the constitutional process will be able to be there as a knowledgeable and informed player about the views of Albertans. That's why we're here.

We very much appreciate your coming forward.

8:30

MR. STORCH: If Mr. Gzowski does happen to interview you, Mr. Horsman, you will be cautious, I'm sure, about moving into relaxed conversation, as our friend Mr. Fraser did the other day

and got himself into trouble. Mr. Gzowski's program is very informal.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, I know. "There is many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip," as they say. Well, thank you very much for coming forward.

Oh, excuse me.

MR. BLAIR: Could I maybe have just a minute to comment on the Senate?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Certainly. What's your name?

MR. BLAIR: My name is Bob Blair. I live about 45 miles southeast of here. I've got the feeling . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: This is being recorded for *Hansard*, so maybe you'd just like to come up and make sure that we don't lose your words, because they must be permanently inscribed, along with other Albertans', when you come before this group.

MR. BLAIR: When we were talking about the Senate, the new proposal that it would be elected and it would be more effective, there seems to be a feeling that maybe that would be so, that it would be more effective. It seems to me that the Senate we have now is appointed and dominated by the party that's in power. An elected Senate, unless it's equal, is going to be dominated by Ontario and Quebec because of their population. If, then, it's more effective, it will only be more effective in fulfilling the wishes of the dominating provinces, which in the end would really be worse for the rest of us.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's why we want the other E, the equal E.

MR. BLAIR: Right. I think the idea that we've taken two steps and that's sure better than nothing – it seems to me it's worse if we don't get all three steps.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I don't think you have any argument with that, but the key words that the federal government used in their paper yesterday were "much more equitable." Now, they then went on to say: look at two versions of "much more equitable" Senate, one of which was set out in the Macdonald commission, which was a weighted but much, much more favourable to the smaller provinces than the current system, and the one which was recommended by the Canada West Foundation, which was total equality. Those are the two models that they suggested be looked at, and even with the one in the Macdonald report, which we'll have to dust off and remember again . . .

MS BARRETT: I do remember it; oh yeah. It had the key to free trade, as I recall.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Leaving aside that issue, it was a much more equitable Senate than the one we have today in terms of the population and representation of the provinces. But you may rest assured that we accept your caution with a great deal of sincerity.

MR. BLAIR: Thanks. I had no part in the presentation that was made by Lloyd and Mr. Grover, but I heartily endorse it. Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You liked that one. Well, that's good; thank you very much.

MR. ROSTAD: I think you should, any of you, get a copy of yesterday's paper from Shirley.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we're going to adjourn and fly back to Edmonton, tomorrow to Wainwright, on Friday an all-day – morning, afternoon, and evening – hearings session in Edmonton, and we will then conclude the public hearing process. I can tell you that from having been at this now for a few weeks in all parts of the province, I very much appreciate the considered and heartfelt views of the residents of this part of the province. I am certainly glad that your MLA, Shirley, and the other presenters from this district urged us to come and visit with you today. It's been very enlightening to us, and it's always nice to get close to home in Medicine Hat.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Chairman, could I just, in closing, thank you for coming again, as I did in my opening comments, and giving this area of the province the opportunity to be heard by the committee. I think by the presentations you've had today, there's no doubt in your mind the sincerity in their wishes to be a part of the decision-making process that we're going through on this important topic.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks a lot, Shirley.

MRS. McCLELLAN: I hope you have a safe journey home.

[The committee adjourned at 8:35 p.m.]