

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, March 26, 1991**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 91/03/26

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. SPEAKER: Be seated, please. I was going to ask permission of the House: may we revert to Introduction of Special Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried. Thank you.
Deputy Government House Leader.

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**

MR. GOGO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to my colleagues in the Legislature. We have with us in the members' gallery this evening some very important Albertans who, over the dinner hour, made an important presentation to a group of members from southern Alberta. It's particularly appropriate, I think, that they're in the gallery tonight, which could be a very historic night as we move forward with the government motion. I'd like to introduce these gentlemen. They're from the Chinook Country Tourist Association and the Tourism Industry Association of Alberta, and I'd ask them to rise as I call their names. I would like to start by recognizing the president of Chinook Country, Mr. Sadru Nanji of Lethbridge, a man who's well known nationally and internationally, and the hon. Hugh Craig from Fort Macleod, an Order of Canada recipient. Along with them we have Mr. Don Gray, who's with the Tourism Industry Association of Alberta, Mr. Randy Smith, who's the general manager of Chinook Country Tourist Association, and Mr. Clint Dunford from Lethbridge, who is a consultant with that association. I'd like hon. members of the Assembly to give the traditional welcome to these visitors.

head: **Government Motions**
Constitutional Reform Committee

5. Moved by Mr. Horsman:

Be it resolved that

- (1) A select special committee on constitutional reform be established to consider the current state of the Canadian federation and consult with the people of the province of Alberta to determine their views on the constitutional future of Alberta and Canada.
- (2) The select special committee shall report back to the Legislative Assembly on the views expressed by Albertans respecting their views on Canada's constitutional future and may make recommendations on the various suggestions for constitutional change.
- (3) Notwithstanding section 53(1) of the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly, the select special committee on constitutional reform shall consist of the following members: Hon. J. Horsman, chairman; S. Schumacher, vice-chairman; J. Ady; Hon. D. Anderson; Hon. N. Betkowski; F. Bradley; P. Calahasen; S. Day; Hon. K. Rostad; G. Severtson; P. Barrett; B. Chivers; R. Hawkesworth; and J. McInnis.
- (4) Upon nomination by the Liberal Party caucus two additional members may be added to the select special committee by resolution of the Legislative Assembly

at any time before the commencement of the public hearings. If two members are not nominated by the Liberal Party caucus before the commencement of public hearings, the Leader of the Official Opposition may appoint two additional members to the select special committee.

- (5) In carrying out its duties, the committee may travel throughout Alberta and undertake an extensive process of consultation with all interested Albertans.
- (6) The chairman and members of the committee shall be paid in accordance with the schedule of category A committees provided in Members' Services Committee Order 10/89.
- (7) Reasonable disbursements by the committee for staff assistance, equipment and supplies, public information needs, accommodation, travel, and other expenditures necessary for the effective conduct of its responsibilities shall be paid subject to the approval of the chairman.
- (8) In carrying out its responsibilities, the committee may, with the concurrence of the head of the department, utilize the services of members of the public service employed in that department or of the staff employed by the Legislative Assembly.
- (9) When its work has been completed, the committee shall report to the Assembly, if it is then sitting, and may release its report during a period when the Assembly is adjourned by depositing a copy with the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly and forwarding a copy to each member of the Assembly.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to make some comments on the motion and the reasons why this government thinks it essential to establish the select special committee on constitutional reform.

Beginning my remarks, I would remind hon. members of the Speech from the Throne that opened this session, in which His Honour the Lieutenant Governor said, and I quote:

The constitutional challenges, those of deciding what Alberta's future in Canada will be, are as important as any my government and Albertans face. Nowhere is the co-operation, commitment, and consensus of Albertans more required than on this issue; the future of our province and Canada is at stake. The issues – language, our political institutions, the division of responsibilities, our fundamental rights and freedoms, the future of our aboriginal peoples, and the very nature of our federal system – are more compelling now than they have ever been. Canada has changed, and Albertans will have to decide what Alberta in a new Canada will be.

Mr. Speaker, over the past few years Canadians have been involved in prolonged discussions on our Constitution. These discussions flow directly and perhaps inevitably from the events of nearly a decade ago when Quebec isolated itself from the patriation of our Constitution in November 1981.

The Meech Lake accord, which this Assembly approved unanimously in 1987, was an attempt to achieve a constitutional reconciliation with Quebec and to provide a constructive way to move forward and address other outstanding and equally important issues. However, this country failed to reach a subsequent national consensus on the Meech Lake accord and on the June 1990 political accord. Moreover, the debate surrounding the accord brought to the fore people's dissatisfaction and frustration with our current federal system and the workings of our country in general. In addition, the accord was the first major attempt to amend our Constitution since its

patriation. Out of that process it became clear that the public wanted more involvement in the amending process. As I have said, Meech Lake is a dead horse. There is no use beating a dead horse, but it is important to understand why the horse died.

In the months since the accord's failure a call for change has arisen in all parts of Canada. Voices in Quebec are echoed in the Allaire report and the report of the Belanger-Campeau commission, which, while not officially public, nonetheless has taken form and been talked about at length in recent days. Those are calling for a radical and a rapid restructuring of the country, and indeed some elements in Quebec are challenging the continued existence of our country.

In response to these developments the federal government has created the Citizens' Forum on Canada's Future and the joint parliamentary committee on the amending formula. Other provinces – New Brunswick, Ontario, and Manitoba – have established provincial commissions or task forces to study Canada's constitutional future. The movement for change and the necessity of this change cannot be denied or ignored, and Alberta will not sit on the sidelines. We, too, must prepare for the next constitutional negotiations, whatever form they will take.

In developing our process to respond to these immense challenges, foremost is our government's commitment to directly involve Albertans. Over the past few months we have undertaken a series of steps to communicate in the broadest possible way with Albertans on the issues confronting the nation. In August of last year Premier Getty established a Constitutional Reform Task Force. Throughout the fall the task force undertook a series of public round table discussions on 13 different topics. Hundreds of Albertans participated in the round table discussions. They heard and directly questioned constitutional experts, commentators, and members of the task force. As well, the proceedings of the sessions were broadcast throughout the province on cable television to provide as many Albertans as possible access to the issues and opinions stated in those sessions.

In February the task force released a discussion paper on the Constitution entitled *Alberta in a New Canada*. This discussion paper, which is based on the round table discussions, is designed to enhance public awareness on constitutional issues and to provide a basis for future discussions. The discussion paper raises many issues, provides some options and alternatives for Albertans to consider, but it does not, however, contain any recommendations. More than 100,000 copies of the discussion paper have been widely distributed throughout Alberta through direct mailing, Treasury Branches, and government offices. We have invited Albertans to make their views known either by writing directly to the task force or by telephoning a toll-free number, which, I repeat for the record, is 1-800-661-3741.

Mr. Speaker, I should point out that when I announced that number during the course of a CBC provincewide broadcast a matter of two days before the discussion paper had been released, by the time I got back to my office, 150 calls had come into the office number, taking my staff somewhat by surprise, because they weren't quite ready to answer the telephones. But that demonstrates, I think, the interest that has been generated in this discussion.

8:10

In addition to that first day, the discussion paper generated thousands of telephone calls. Hundreds of letters have come in. I must say that I have been very impressed by the response. It is evident from the letters and the briefs we have received that

Albertans care deeply about the future of our country. They have taken a great deal of time and care in providing thoughtful responses and advice. It is equally clear that Albertans have strongly-held convictions about our country's future. We are now in the process of reviewing and recording in a systematic way the views expressed in these communications, and it is our intention to provide all of this information to members of the select special committee when it is established.

The select special committee represents the next and perhaps the most important phase in our commitment to a comprehensive public consultation process. The purpose of the committee is to review the current state of the Canadian federation and, in a variety of ways, including public hearings throughout the province, to consult with the people of Alberta to determine their views on the constitutional future of Alberta and Canada. It is our intention, Mr. Speaker, after the select special committee has completed its public consultation process, to prepare a report for full debate in this Assembly, hopefully before summer this year. I recognize that these proposed time lines do not give the select special committee much time to complete its work, and on that issue I would like to make a couple of points.

First, it is our intention to be as flexible as possible with respect to timing a final report. As I have stated many times, we are committed to involving all interested Albertans in the process, and we will not sacrifice that commitment to expedience. At the same time, it is important that Alberta demonstrate its leadership on this issue as it has on previous constitutional and other issues. Our province will not be able to dictate the timing of future constitutional discussions, but it is imperative that wherever these discussions take place and in whatever form, Alberta is at the table with a clear position that reflects a consensus of Albertans as expressed through this Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Alberta and members of this Assembly are confronted with an enormous challenge and a responsibility. We may be facing the most fundamental review of the Constitution since before 1867. The issues before us as a nation and as a people go far beyond matters of minor conflict or matters of competition between orders of government. Canadians are being asked to make decisions which will shape the very nature of this country and will affect the quality of life in this province for future generations.

In my view, the breadth of the constitutional challenges before us go far beyond the scope of partisan politics. It has always been the government's intention to involve all parties and in fact all members of this Assembly in developing a constitutional plan for Albertans. I regret the announced decision of the Liberal Party not to participate in the proposed committee, but I would ask them to reconsider their decision so that they, too, will listen to what Albertans have to say. I assure all hon. members of what I have said publicly and will repeat again: we are not going to tell Albertans what we think is good for them or for Alberta within a new Canada; we are going to listen to what they think is good for Alberta and for Canada. There are no predetermined conclusions or firm recommendations that the government has before this Assembly or in our minds as we embark on this process. So we face an important responsibility.

We are also presented with a significant opportunity to improve the operations of this country and to do so to the benefit of all its citizens. We have the opportunity to regain – and I use that word advisedly – the confidence of the people in the capacity of their governments to resolve complex issues. We must move forward confidently to identify the problems and then

advance the solutions. In doing so, we intend to seek the advice of all interested Albertans.

It is my hope that all members of the Legislature will support the important activities of this committee, and I seek your support this evening in that responsible and challenging task which faces us as Albertans but as Canadians first.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Tonight I speak on behalf of the New Democrat Official Opposition caucus not only as the House leader but also as the spokesperson for federal and intergovernmental affairs for our caucus. I would like to indicate initially that we are in favour of this motion and will be supporting it unless something bizarre happens tonight, and I can't speculate what that might be. In any event, I would like to discuss a little bit of the background that goes with the concept of all-party committees and the Official Opposition perspective on them in general as well as this one in particular.

In 1987 the Official Opposition asked in this Assembly on repeated occasions for the government to orchestrate all-party hearings throughout Alberta to deliberate the subject matter contained in the Meech Lake accord. Those requests were denied time and again. The Official Opposition New Democrats believe that the Constitution, the continuing federation of Canada, and what form it might take are of such importance that when we could not convince the government to participate in those hearings, we decided to conduct them ourselves. This is not the first occasion where we've asked for all-party committees of any description, and I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, it won't be the last time, nor will it be the last time that the Official Opposition New Democrats will participate in all-party committees. We believe in them. We're sorry that we weren't able to do that at the time of Meech Lake. We think things might have turned out differently, in fact, if there had been all-party hearings. But because there were not is no reason to not participate now, and I'd like to make that clear. In fact, now is the time, if ever there was a critical moment in Canada, where we need to revive the notion of the importance and legitimacy of all-party committees and public hearings on the future of our province and our country.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to also point out something that I have said publicly to the media, and that is this: it is not the intention or design of the Official Opposition New Democrats to legitimize in any way what we believe to have been a flawed process in the first instance, and that was the government's decision to conduct hearings on the basis of a government-only committee. We never endorsed that policy, nor do we now. We always believe that all-party committees of the Assembly are the best route to go no matter what the subject matter at hand, and we stand by that position. So make no mistake: we are not here to openly or otherwise condone single-party committee hearings on the future of Canada, we don't legitimize them having happened, and we are glad that the government has come to its senses with respect to that.

8:20

Mr. Speaker, we also have made a couple of recommendations to the committee in an informal sense. I attended a meeting a couple of weeks ago, which I thought was also going to be attended by the House leader for the Liberal opposition, and made our case with respect to our requirement that if the committee does not reach consensus in the final analysis, those members on the committee dissenting from the recommenda-

tions of the report be entitled under the provisions of Standing Order 65 to have their names so listed.

I have also made the case and will continue to make the case that I fear the time frame is much too tight. We've rushed into other things before. In some instances things weren't rushed, and in some instances they were. Right now, and I have made this case to members of the committee – even though the committee has not been established, we have had a meeting – we are of the view that Albertans should be responding to a full agenda and not a partial agenda. Currently Albertans and all Canadians are able to contemplate the options put before the country as a result of the Allaire report out of Quebec. That is a position that has been adopted by the Liberal Party of Quebec, not just the government, partisanship and nonpartisanship combined. We all know broadly what the contents of the Belanger-Campeau commission are going to suggest. I understand that they have reached consensus but for two of their members. We know that they are recommending that a referendum proceed.

I believe and the New Democrats believe that Albertans and all Canadians should have the right to respond not just to those reports but to another national-scope report which, despite the fact that it shall not contain recommendations, will undoubtedly give us a broad picture and sometimes a specific picture of what's on the minds of Canadians from coast to coast. That report will be called the Spicer commission report. We do not want to see Albertans responding only to one thing or only to one idea, and we do not assume, Mr. Speaker, that Albertans are capable of only responding to the immediate. We understand that Albertans are very political people and have a deep desire to maintain Canada in a way that is acceptable to all Canadians. But if, having conducted the hearings from April 28 to May 4, we believe that Albertans have not been given ample opportunity to speak their minds, if we believe that there has somehow been a stacked process, if we believe that there is a predetermined outcome on the agenda of the government, the Official Opposition will make that known publicly and reserves the right to retreat from the committee even though we understand that that technically requires a motion from the Assembly itself.

On the other hand, I want to make it very clear that the Official Opposition New Democrats believe that what is much more important is that we listen to the views of Albertans and that we construe from those views and from the views of the 83 members elected to represent all Albertans a policy or a series of recommendations that will suit both Alberta and Canada. Above all else, Mr. Speaker, we agree with the government when it says that this issue is too big for partisanship. On that basis alone I'm pleased to say that we wish to participate in this committee, we wish for an unanimous report, and we wish for a bright future for Alberta and Canada together.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I wish to introduce an amendment to the motion that the hon. Deputy Premier has put forward. The amendment, I think, is in the hands of the Clerk.

MR. SPEAKER: Read the amendment, please.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, the amendment reads that the following is added after section (9):

The Assembly urge the House leaders of each of the party caucuses to undertake not to impose party discipline on members of their party in respect of the committee deliberations and

decisions and in respect of the ultimate disposition of the committee report in the Legislature.

The matter has been reviewed by legal counsel and I take it is sufficient to meet with his approval.

MR. SPEAKER: Excuse me, just on that point. The matter has been reviewed. It's the Chair that decides, but the Chair, however, does agree that the matter is in order. The amendment has been distributed. Thank you.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, am I at liberty to proceed?

MR. SPEAKER: Proceed, hon. member.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, this decision was not made lightly; that is, the decision for our party not to participate unless and until the government agreed to allow for a vote on conscience, or a free vote, to take place in this Legislature. I believe, we believe in the party system and in the legislative system and in the committee system. We think it's important to delve into issues and examine them thoroughly and ask questions and satisfy ourselves on the importance of an issue from every which direction. Normally we would have no difficulty and would almost without exception participate in such committee processes, but it's important that some history be brought out on this particular matter.

The hon. Deputy Premier made two interesting comments this evening. One of them was that it was always his intention or the intention of the government to involve all parties. That's an important statement. The second statement he made that I think was equally important was that he indicated that there was no predetermined position that the government had in embarking on this process; that is, this constitutional review process and determination of a position. I wish that were true. I wish that I and my colleagues could be convinced that that really was the case. But I'm convinced that it is not the case, and there is ample evidence. I think there is evidence that goes way further than you need on this issue to be convinced that that isn't the case.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of Meech Lake was raised by the Deputy Premier and by the spokesperson for the Official Opposition. Our party did not and does not support that Meech Lake accord that was signed in 1987. Yes, we were not in the House when that vote was taken, and it's unfortunate. That doesn't look good, and we were criticized for it. But we didn't approve of it, we didn't agree with it, and we didn't promote it. That position was promoted by the government and all members of the government through the elected representatives of the government.

As time went on and as Albertans grew to understand the Meech Lake accord in a much better way, they were unhappy with the fact that they couldn't make their representations to government. The spokesperson from the opposition has indicated that. But they were also profoundly unhappy, and I think angry is not too strong a word to say. They did not agree with the position that the government was taking. Every poll that I saw when this issue became well known to Albertans clearly showed that a majority of Albertans did not like the position that the government was taking on the Meech Lake accord. That accord gave Quebec uniqueness, separateness, distinctiveness. It made them more equal than the other equal provinces of Canada.

8:30

In the end – I think I'm correct – the last polls before the June discussion on Meech in Ottawa showed that about 80 percent of Albertans did not approve of the position that the government was taking on that issue. In fact, I remember in one particular poll that was taken and reported in the *Alberta Report*, it was asked who best spoke on behalf of Albertans, and the overwhelming majority of Albertans answered that it was the Premier of Newfoundland that was in sync, that was a better spokesman for their concerns than our own Premier of Alberta. So Meech Lake should have been a lesson to us, a lesson that you can't bully your way through something and ignore the advice of others and the respect and consideration of others' views.

Well, the next thing that happens in this historical line of evidence is the establishment of this special committee in August. The hon. Deputy Premier says it was the Premier who established this special committee. It was established, Mr. Speaker, when you and other members of this Assembly were in Fredericton at a parliamentary conference. I was shocked to learn that the committee was named at that particular time, when we were at the parliamentary conference, but the shock was minimal compared to the shock when I was told by reporters and subsequently read what it was the Deputy Premier said as to why members of the NDP and Liberal caucuses – the reasons that were stated disintitling them to involvement in the committee in August.

It would appear that the Deputy Premier has very conveniently forgotten it, but those were profound statements in August. As I read the reports, the statements were to the effect that: "The hon. member for Edmonton-Glengarry is a centralist. We don't want that kind of thinking in this committee; therefore, we are not inviting the NDP and we are not inviting the Liberal Party to involve themselves in this process." Now, I don't think you have to be much of a wizard to interpret that statement as suggesting that the Premier, the Deputy Premier, or all the members of that committee had made up their minds that a certain position was going to be taken and no respect was going to be given to the thoughts and the ideas and the submissions and the suggestions of others.

In fact, if we're looking for an area where there is incredible pulling away from the parliamentary process, it has to be that particular move – not ours – that particular move of the Deputy Premier in August saying: "We're going to establish a parliamentary committee. We're going to look at the issues that affect Canada, but because Decore has stated a certain position, we don't want any part of that, we don't want to hear any part of that, and we don't want any part of those people on our committee." That's the issue. That's where the focal point should be placed on this whole matter, not that now the Liberals are pulling out. So that's the second thing that needs to be identified in the list of evidence.

The third thing that is important to identify is the meeting that took place in Lloydminster. I think I'm correct in saying that the Deputy Premier was at that meeting. We see for the first time a paper that is brought out by the ministers involved in the treasury departments of the western provinces talking about the debt of the national government and how if provinces took over many areas of responsibility they could control debt in a better way. The word "disentanglement" is used. Mr. Speaker, when I first saw that word in the document the Treasurer signed for that Lloydminster conference, it didn't

dawn on me what it meant. The effect of it had not sunk in from the first reading of that document. It was the next meeting of the western Premiers that really showed what was happening. Disentanglement is taken from being an obscure, oblique term, phrase, or word and becomes a concept. It becomes a concept whereby it would appear clear that ministers of our government, including the Deputy Premier, have taken and established a fixed position with respect to issues like health care, social services, education, and taxation, because to some extent those issues are talked about.

The next thing that happens is that this committee proceeds to involve itself independently of the NDP and independently of the Liberals. Nobody ever says, "Hey, fellas, ladies and gentlemen, come over and help us out; we're in a bit of a fix." They proceed on their own, and as the Deputy Premier says, they meet hundreds of people in round table discussions. So they respect the views of those people they invite to the round table for discussions, but still they don't respect the views of the NDP and the Liberals who accounted for more than 50 per cent of the popular vote in the last election.

How come? Why not? What's the reason? Well, to me the reason must be a continuation of that mind-set that has been established, and that is, "Liberals are centralists." I'm not sure what NDPs are yet; they haven't yet fixed a position. "Liberals are centralists. We don't want that kind of thinking. It has no place in the deliberations of our committee, and therefore we don't want you to be part of it."

Mr. Speaker, this thing has gone from bad to worse in terms of how the government established it, dealt with it, and worked with it, and I think Albertans can see through this whole mess. What they see is a government that wanted to disentangle itself. They see a government that backed Quebec on the Meech Lake accord and was one of the strongest proponents of backing that Quebec agenda and forgetting about the problems of the rest of Canada. It's a government position, I think, that's clearly established. So why have these committee meetings? Why go through the sham and the charade when we know that the position of the committee or most of the members or all of the members, including the Premier and the Deputy Premier, is already determined?

Mr. Speaker, when we saw that, when that was clear to us, we said, "No, we want to participate in this process; the parliamentary committee process is important." So we wrote a long letter to the Deputy Premier in which we set out a number of suggestions on how the process could be made effective, how the public could be involved in a bigger and a better way, and how electronic media, perhaps, could be used. All of those suggestions were given in good spirit with good intentions. We also suggested that because we saw this historical development, this establishment of a position, we said: "We're worried. We're worried that whatever we say isn't going to matter and that we're just going to be warning some chairs somewhere watching this process unfold before us, because the government has a predetermined position."

So we suggested in our letter to the Deputy Premier that we have a free vote, that a vote on conscience be allowed for every member of this Assembly so that they could go back to their constituents after these hearings were held, they could go back to the farm sales, they could go back to the community leagues, and they could go back to the functions that they normally and usually attend and interact and dialogue with their constituents and find out whether the position was a good one or a bad one, whether there should be this idea or that idea or whatever it was they thought should be proposed would be proposed. Well, that

wasn't accepted, and for us that was the last straw, Mr. Speaker. We don't see this, then, as a free-thinking, a free involvement of all of the members of this Assembly. We see a government that made a profound error in the Meech Lake process setting itself to make yet another profound error, and we don't want to be part of that sham and that charade, and it is with deep regret that we will not participate unless this amendment is passed.

Thank you.

8:40

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Edmonton-Belmont on the amendment.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Having listened to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry go through his statement, I just want to clarify, with respect to this amendment he's proposing, what I think I heard at the very end, that unless this amendment is passed, it is the position of the Liberal caucus that they will not at all participate in the committee that has been moved tonight through Motion 5.

I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if I could just take that one step further. Is that just reflecting on the individual Member for Edmonton-Glengarry or is that his response on behalf of all of his caucus? I suppose the question that I would like to put to any member of the Liberal caucus is: if this amendment passes, does it mean that the Liberal caucus will participate in the committee? Does it mean that there will be two members of the Liberal caucus serving on the committee and going out and listening to those representations that Albertans want to make with respect to the Constitution of Canada? I would appreciate a response to that question from any member of the Liberal caucus.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, . . .

MR. SPEAKER: No, I'm sorry, hon. member. No. You've spoken on the amendment.

Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Point of Order Questioning a Member

MR. TAYLOR: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: What is the point of order, hon. member?

MR. TAYLOR: If I may, Mr. Speaker, I believe there was not sufficient time elapsed between the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry . . . [interjections] Try to close your mouth and open your ears for a minute to see what I'll finish with here. Not to you, Mr. Speaker; it was to tell them of your existence. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry just sat down when the hon. Member for Edmonton-Belmont got up to ask a question. I think it's quite within the rules of order for a question to be asked, so I think the hon. member has a right to answer.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair's understanding of the process of the debate is this. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry had quite clearly finished his comments. Therefore, that's the conclusion of his speaking time. Had the Member for Edmonton-Belmont wanted to just rise and ask if the member would entertain a question and the member had responded "yes," then that process could have been completed. However, that's not

what occurred. Therefore, some other member of the caucus would perhaps have to make those comments.

The Chair has recognized Edmonton-Whitemud and listens with great attention.

Debate Continued

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my intention to make a few comments on the motion that's in front of us, the amendment that has been introduced by the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry. Earlier on, before the supper break in the Legislative Assembly, we saw some joking around about parliamentary reform. On occasion there is nothing wrong with a bit of humour and taking a few jabs back and forth and so on and so forth. It happens in any parliamentary process and at times it's done, I guess, as a kind of refresher to try and break a tension or whatever that is occurring in the House.

Here we're talking about a situation that is not a joking matter. It's a very, very serious matter. We're talking in terms of, yes, parliamentary reform to a degree, but more important than talking in terms of parliamentary reform at this time, I believe, Mr. Speaker, that the amendment as proposed by the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry is attempting to deal with a matter that is extremely important to us in Alberta, an extremely important process that affects all Canadians. It's a process that I believe reflects one of the most critical times that Canadian history has ever gone through. We're talking in terms of a process where we are one instrument towards an overall machine to try and reconstruct some degree of Canadian unity and try and spell out what Canada's future is all about for, I believe, not only Albertans but Canadians.

We're here to protect the interests of Albertans, and I believe Albertans are asking for fair play. We saw a process not that long ago with the Meech Lake accord where the Prime Minister of this country openly boasted afterwards about manipulating a process to his advantage, intentionally waiting until the last minute to increase the stakes, and it backfired on him. It didn't work. But he was playing with Canadian unity, and it was very, very unfortunate that there wasn't a fair process when the Meech Lake accord was dealt with. Maybe the outcome would have been different. Here again to a lesser degree is a similar situation where here in this particular Legislative Assembly we have an opportunity to be a very important part of a process leading towards the enhancement of Canadian unity. It can be done in a fair manner that reflects equal participation, equal opportunity of participation by all Members of this Legislative Assembly, which combined represent all Albertans.

I guess it could be argued that those on that side of the House represent a portion of Albertans that reflect less than 50 percent of the population, but I won't get into that. Combined we reflect or represent one hundred percent of all Albertans, and it becomes very important that we develop a process that is meaningful, that is fair to all of us, and that gives all of us the opportunity to participate in a very meaningful way, not in a method where it's predetermined or where the Government House Leader states we're going to have 10 members that are going to vote the way the government Whip states they must vote and that four members of the Official Opposition and two members of this particular caucus – in other words, six members – are simply there to legitimize a process.

I think that was a learning experience from a process the government went through before that didn't work out that well, because Albertans said that was not fair play when you set up a process that totally excludes opposition. Because Albertans, more than 50 percent of Albertans I'll remind you, recognize

that there are representatives in this House other than government representatives. It becomes very important that we learn by those lessons, Mr. Speaker. The amendment that is put forward is simply trying to reflect or work towards that process that would be fairer than the conditions laid down by the Government House Leader.

8:50

As I conclude, Mr. Speaker, the question was asked if the leader of this particular caucus is speaking for all of us. Well, I'm going to state what the position is of the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. I don't want to sit in a seat, as he has said we're going to sit there, just to warm up a seat. I want to be part of a process that is meaningful. If the process that is laid down by the government can't be adjusted to make it meaningful, I don't want to be part of that process, because I don't want to see my time wasted. I would sooner that we as an individual group here were able to develop a strategy on our own that we will get that participation from Albertans. We will get that feedback from Albertans, and we'll do it in a manner that ensures it is fair to us, that it is a meaningful process, and that we get something out of it that is worth while.

On that note I'll conclude, Mr. Speaker.

Point of Order Questioning a Member

MR. SIGURDSON: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, Member for Edmonton-Belmont.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm wondering if the hon. member would entertain one question.

MR. SPEAKER: I'm sorry. Again, the hon. member has sat down and concluded his remarks.

The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Debate Continued

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud seemed to believe that the question was whether the Liberal leader spoke for the Liberal caucus in the House. That was not the question put by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Belmont. It was a very clear question, I thought, that was put to the Liberal caucus. There was no ambiguity about it. The question was: what happens if the House, this Legislature, adopts the amendment put forward by the hon. Liberal leader? Does that mean then that the Liberal caucus will appoint two members to serve on the select standing committee? Now, that's the second time it's been put to the Liberal caucus, and I believe the Assembly is waiting for a clear answer from someone who can speak with authority on behalf of the Liberal caucus.

Given that the Liberal leader has suggested that party discipline not be imposed, I assume that their leader has given an undertaking to his caucus not to impose party discipline on them in regards to the debate on this matter. But I would hope that sometime in the next few minutes the Liberal caucus could find the discipline to be able to give a clear, unambiguous answer to the Assembly to that simple question. While they're at it, it might be helpful if some member of the Liberal caucus could suggest to us whether this is the only amendment they're proposing to put forward in terms of this motion on the floor. If there are other amendments and thereby other conditions that the Liberals would attach to their participation on the committee,

I would hope that they would use the first available opportunity to tell the Assembly if that is what their intention is.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I think the answer would have been told quite a while ago if the NDP, or the members over there asking the questions, had been able to dissolve the glue that's stuck them to their chairs. Because the rules are quite simple, like having to leap up and ask a question while the debate is on. We did our best to try to open it up and leave the door open for them to rush through. I'm afraid you slammed it shut on their fingers, but of course that goes with the ruling.

Speaker's Ruling Criticizing the Speaker

MR. SPEAKER: Excuse me, hon. member. That's almost criticism of the Chair. The point is this: the Chair did not slam any door shut on anyone; the hon. members slammed it on themselves.

Now let's get on to what the amendment is.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, it depends what you slam the door for. If it's to keep the tiger out, it's a good service. But I didn't do it as criticizing you; indeed, I thought I was praising you by saying you'd slammed it on their fingers.

Debate Continued

MR. TAYLOR: But let's get back to the matters of the day.

It is a free vote, and if the speakers there wish to poll each member and if they listen to each member, they will tell that each member has arrived at a conclusion that they do not want to participate in this unless there is a free vote. The Member for Calgary-Mountain View wanted to know: if the amendment passed, would Liberals be participating on the committee? Of course; it's implicit they would.

But I'm sure the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, who's sat with me on a number of these government committees, one of the most recent – I'm sure it'll refresh his memory – being the heritage trust fund, where the government is in domination of the majority of the membership. If you make any sort of recommendation, the whole party structure comes down on the government side to push their thought through. In fact, I have seen a government member, possibly because he arrived late or possibly because he hadn't read his instructions properly, make a motion, and then the chairman would delay the meeting while they got off and huddled, and he'd come back and vote against his own motion because the caucus had told him and woke him up. That of course applies to the females when I say "him" – or her.

So what we have is a lockstep bunch over there that will do almost anything, or they wait for the message, much like Pavlov's dog, as to how they're going to vote. To go into that sort of an arrangement where they have the majority of the members on the committee and would vote only the way their Whip tells them – because, Mr. Speaker, I've also seen that committee adjourn early because they didn't know what to do and come back the next day with a vote after they'd received the wisdom from whoever was in charge. The stone tablets had been brought down, the bush had been lit, and somebody told them how they were going to vote.

Now you ask us to join that type of committee where there's no type of elasticity of thinking, no type of imagination, or no type of plurality in their thinking? It's ridiculous. Then add to that the rules of the House that clearly say that a minority report is not allowed, and we're trapped. It would just be like joining

a regiment with a bunch of people already regimented and preprogrammed. We can't even pull the plug out of the wall. At least the memory of the computer goes all to the dickens, as you know, Mr. Speaker, if you pull the plug out of the wall, but pull the plug out of the wall on these people, and they'd be plugged back in again the next day and come down with what the government tells them to do.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's absolutely ridiculous to think that any of us would want to come in on something as multiply oriented and as diverse and as complicated as bringing down a Constitution to the Legislature and have them tell us that we can't have a minority report nor will they take the whips off. This is all we're asking of the House leader, a very, very small thing indeed. I know he's turned his back on me, but I know his ears are working, or I hope they are. I see they are burning, so they must be working. It's very easy; all he has to do is get up and plainly say: Mr. Speaker, we will pull off the whips, and we will allow them to vote the way they like. He might be shocked. He might be surprised even, but the point is that all we're asking him to do is pull off the whips.

Vote for this amendment, and then we'll all go into this together and debate and let the best person's ideas come through. We'll do our best to come up with a committee. I don't know who's going to be on the committee from the Liberal ranks, but the point is: if we know it's a fair game before we start, okay. But to go into the type of game now, where the chief coach is sitting there or the referee without his striped jacket, admittedly, with his ears burning, literally telling the people that if they dare vote against the way he wants them to, then they are going to be in a bad position indeed.

No, Mr. Speaker, I've been in this House too long and know the Pavlovian type of reaction they have out there when it comes to voting as a group. I've never, never in all the years I've been associated with this House seen that group split on a vote, so why the heck should they now? [some applause]

Look at that. They sit there and clap their flippers and bark all in unison, and you expect us to throw them a fish, Mr. Speaker? It's impossible. [interjections]

Mr. Speaker, I have been told that I maybe should stand up here just a moment or two in case the door gets closed before they can ask a question. Nobody wants to ask a question? All right. I will sit down.

9:00

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Speaker, I'll take the bait if the hon. member would like a question. Does his reference to the members of the Liberal Party not being involved with this committee because there is a majority on this side of the House mean that the Liberal Party will now be withdrawing from all committees that they're involved with in the House?

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raises a very interesting point. It's one of the ones I've often contemplated upon. The heritage trust fund committee was just a classic example. We laboured long like the elephant. I think it was months and months we were in gestation, and we brought forward a mouse at the end. I think there were two recommendations. The hon. gentleman brings up a very, very interesting point indeed, but we're not debating that subject right now. The uselessness of the present committee system as it is structured in this House is something that I'm sure you could do a lot of debate on.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Now is the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark going to ask a question of the previous speaker, or is he going to speak on the amendment? You're on the amendment? [interjections] Thank you. On the amendment.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise of course to support this amendment. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order.
Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to begin by saying that I am impressed by the fact that not only are the NDP using this as an opportunity to ask us questions, but now I notice the government is using this as an opportunity to ask the Liberals questions. I want to state that it just seems to be such good practice for something that they're going to have to do day after day after the next election.

Mr. Speaker, we believe we have an obligation not to be party to a process which is clearly being manipulated by this government, which has clearly been manipulated in the past. I think the very telling action of this government, expressed so eloquently by the Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs when he first structured the process, the very telling statement was to exclude the Liberal Party from that process because they had, he perceived, a certain view of the constitutional debate. If that is not a profound and unacceptable arrogance in a process which must be based in openness, in accessibility for all points of view, then it is very difficult to say what kind of process this minister could imagine that could be manipulated more diligently and with less dignity and grace than he has demonstrated his capability to do in this case. It is unacceptable for us or for any party to become part of a process which has been structured and manipulated to this point by that government to exclude some views of Albertans from a process that must be open. We simply cannot any longer accept that we would be party to that, particularly on an issue that should perhaps more than any other issue that is debated and considered in this House rise above petty partisan politics.

Mr. Speaker, let's consider what can occur without a free vote. The fact is that that government caucus can pass a constitutional resolution with 50 percent plus one vote in its caucus. That amounts to, I believe, 30 members. Those 30 members can therefore consolidate the position of the government and bring that position to this Legislature. Therefore, 30 out of 83 members – that is, 36 percent of this Legislature – can precipitate a constitutional position that may very well fashion the future of this country. It may either limit options or open up options and other possibilities. That, in an issue of this import, of this significance, of this substance to the future of this country, cannot be contemplated by the Liberal caucus.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Westlock-Sturgeon made a good and relevant point with respect to our experience on other committees. The Heritage Savings Trust Fund Committee: we sat months on that committee, as we have year after year, and that committee presented and considered 45 or more resolutions. It's very interesting to note that three of those resolutions were passed by the committee and that none of the other 42 or so resolutions saw the light of day in that report, and when we requested the committee chairman to allow us to put minority opinions in the report or to present a minority report to reflect the breadth of ideas, the creativity, the different possibilities, the breadth and depth of debate on issues important to the manage-

ment of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund, those ideas were excluded.

Mr. Speaker, while it is unacceptable that that should happen with something as important as the Heritage Savings Trust Fund, it is equally if not far more unacceptable that that should happen in debating and considering something as significant and as important as the constitutional process in this country. The fact is that there will be many varied views presented by Albertans, to that committee perhaps, to our input process as we circulate our constitutional paper to stimulate discussion, and that every one of the views should be given the opportunity to see the light of day in the kind of report that will be presented by that legislative committee. If that is not to happen, then that process is flawed, and our belief is that it is flawed beyond repair.

Mr. Speaker, we can answer very, very clearly that if this amendment is accepted by this Legislature – and every back-bencher across the way should welcome the opportunity to express themselves in a free vote and should not hide behind this veil of partisan discipline in an issue of this nature – then there is no question, Member for Calgary-Mountain View, no question but that we would sit on that committee. If you have to ask that question, if you can't anticipate the answer, one can wonder whether or not you're following this debate at all.

Mr. Speaker, I answer that question unequivocally: we will be participants in that committee if this amendment is accepted. I would ask and urge that the House, directed by the Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs, rise above the manipulation that he indulged in before and support this amendment.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I think it might be timely to speak on the amendment. In terms of the situation that we see ourselves in this evening, I've read the amendment with a great deal of interest. I think it would be useful to reflect upon the letter referred to by the hon. leader of the Liberal Party that he wrote to me after I had requested the participation of the Liberal Party in this select committee. He quite correctly points out that a number of suggestions were advanced by him in that letter to me, and after having met with the House leader of the Liberal Party, I agreed to all the suggestions that were advanced in that particular letter save one.

9:10

All those suggestions, which included a number of useful recommendations about utilizing modern methods of communications, electronic means, et cetera, and a number of other items, were quite useful. I indicated that quite clearly to the House leader for the Liberal Party. The one which I had reservations about and expressed to the House leader of the Liberal Party and in subsequent correspondence with the leader of the Liberal Party was a demand by the leader of the Liberal Party that there be no party discipline with respect to the deliberations of the select committee and the ultimate determination of the issue within this Assembly. It occurred to me, and I still hold to this view, that it is not acceptable in the parliamentary system for a demand by one leader of a political party to be placed upon a caucus of another political party. Indeed, it is quite out of order for that to occur. I have that reservation, and I still hold to it.

Having read the amendment, however, which is proposed this evening, I see that the demand has been removed, and instead of that we are urged to consider free votes. There is a great deal to be said for the concept of free votes on issues of such great consequence as the Constitution of Canada, a great deal to be said for that.

I don't know and I can only guess at what kind of party discipline exists within the Liberal caucus. I've never had an experience of being in such a place nor will I ever have. I've never had the experience of being in the New Democratic Party caucus. I can only speak from having had the experience now for 16 years as of today of being a member of the Progressive Conservative Party caucus. I can assure hon. members of the other caucuses that we have lively debates within our caucuses, and usually we have come to consensus. I would also say that we have been able, then, to support the measures undertaken by the government on the broad range of issues during the course of that 16-year period.

Let us look at how select committees should work. Indeed, they should work in a nonpartisan way. I hope that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark will read my remarks in *Hansard* that I used to introduce the motion this evening, because I said when I opened the debate that we wanted to approach this without partisanship. I also just make passing reference again to the paper which we produced called *Alberta in a New Canada*. I note that nobody in or outside this Assembly has accused us of producing a partisan position paper. Indeed, I have read reports, if they can be relied upon, by the leader of the Liberal Party to say that a good paper was produced, and that will serve as a discussion.

AN HON. MEMBER: It's not a position paper.

MR. HORSMAN: It is not a position paper.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, order.

MR. HORSMAN: It's a discussion paper.

I think, Mr. Speaker, now that I have heard from the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark that if this amendment is accepted – the urging of House leaders rather than the demanding of House leaders that party discipline be waived during the course of the process – that indeed it may be an acceptable amendment to the government. I want it to be very clear in my remarks on this amendment that I understand that if this amendment is accepted by this Assembly this evening, there will be no doubt that the Liberal Party will name its two members to sit on the committee and that they have no further conditions that they intend to attach upon their participation during the course of the process. If they can answer that clearly and definitively this evening and clearly understand as I conclude my remarks that that is it, folks, then I would urge members of the Assembly to indeed support the amendment by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry on those terms, and let's get on with the job of hearing from Albertans.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. minister, before you take your place, there is a question request from Edmonton-Glengarry.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I'm taken by surprise, and it is perhaps a pleasant surprise, but I don't want there to be any doubt on how we see this. I'm sorry that the House leader for our caucus isn't here this evening. She had an accident and couldn't be here. I don't know the conversations that took place between the hon. Deputy Premier – I have third-party information, hearsay information, but as I understand the situation . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Order. I'm waiting to hear the question that's being asked.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, the question is clear. We want an undertaking, and this has to go further than playing with words, an undertaking from the Deputy Premier that the whips are off, that there is no party discipline. The Deputy Premier is playing with the word "urge." I want to make it clear that the word "undertaking" is in this motion. [interjections]

AN HON. MEMBER: This is a game.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, order. This is not a game.

A question was asked. Is there a response, House leader?
The Member for Vegreville.

MR. FOX: Mr. Speaker, I feel moved to get into the debate on this amendment to the motion. I was going begin by congratulating the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry for the learning curve that he's on for realizing that in order to introduce amendments, you do indeed have to print them and circulate them.

However, Mr. Speaker, what we see him trying to do by way of the question that he just asked to the hon. Government House Leader is that he wants to change the words in his amendment by some sort of mystical process that only he is aware of, and I think that's unacceptable. I think when we consider whether or not to support amendments or motions or Bills or estimates in this House, we need to look at what is written, what is there for us to consider, and decide on the merit and impact of the words written if they're supportable. That's the process, and that's what I think we need to do when we look at the motion.

The Member for Westlock-Sturgeon in his eloquent remarks made some comments about fingers being closed in doors. I well remember an occasion when he and his band of gypsies had eight minutes to get here and didn't even get their fingers in the door before it was closed. His memory might not be as good as mine, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, would you permit a question?

MR. SPEAKER: Will Vegreville take a question? [interjection]
No. Order. I'd have to get an answer first, hon. member. [interjection] Hon. member, it's not for you to determine.

Will Vegreville take a question?

MR. FOX: Yes, I certainly will, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Now Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had my toe in the door.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to ask the hon. member if he not only remembers us not getting our fingers in the door but his House leader assuring us before the door was slammed that they wouldn't be taking the vote that evening.

9:20

MR. FOX: No, no. That's an absolute misrepresentation of the facts, and I'd deal with that with the hon. member at length. That's an absolute untruth.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, we've often felt in this Assembly that it's not up to us to fill the air with words in the rare event that the Liberals may choose to grace this Assembly with their presence. It would be remiss of me not to note that there's almost a full complement of them here tonight. It's very unusual

because there's no media, no television cameras, but I am impressed that they have taken this issue seriously.

The issue here is whether or not they're implying that this amendment somehow deals with the concept of free votes in the Legislature, that the whips be off the caucuses, and that members vote according to their consciences. I kind of resent the implication, Mr. Speaker, because the fact is that almost every vote we participate in on this side of the House is a free vote. It just so happens that we agree with each other, that we spend a lot of time analyzing issues, coming to common positions and feeling good about them. That's absolutely true. I know it's difficult for Liberals to understand. The reason we're New Democrats is because we have principle, we have philosophy, we have direction, we have unity, and we happen to agree with each other. I well understand how difficult it is for a party that can take two, three, maybe four positions on a given issue in the same day in the course of the same debate. I don't need to enunciate examples more recent than game ranching and sale of AGT and fiscal responsibility and all sorts of things that they flip-flop on. So the issue is not free vote in the Legislature; the issue is that the Liberals cannot get their act together.

Now, the implication of this amendment, Mr. Speaker, is that the Liberals recognize that there are some difficulties with the process of select standing or select special committees; that is, that opposition members are outnumbered; the government controls the agenda. That is indeed the case in this Assembly.

AN HON. MEMBER: That's not true.

MR. FOX: That is the case in this Assembly; that's the case in every committee, Mr. Speaker. What we have to do as duly empowered representatives of our constituents is learn to live with that, learn to work with it, and, frankly, work to change it. What we're advocating on this side is an increased, enhanced role for select standing committees, because we found that to be a useful process. I share the concern of the hon. Minister for Consumer and Corporate Affairs. I wonder if the Liberals are saying to us by way of this amendment that they no longer have faith in their participation in select standing committees. If that's the case, I wish they'd take their members off, because they're taking up a lot of unnecessary space on committees that they're overrepresented on, like the Heritage Savings Trust Fund Committee. We take that role and responsibility seriously. I can refer to many examples of productive work.

MR. TAYLOR: You need the money, don't you?

MR. FOX: You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

AN HON. MEMBER: Resign, resign.

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

MR. FOX: Some of the most productive work done by members in this Assembly is done in the process of committee where we're able to lay down, even for a short period of time, our political hats, pool our resources, and work for the benefit of the people of the province of Alberta. I recognize that we don't win the votes, we don't get our way, but we have a chance to make sure we're heard and put our agenda forward so that people know what's going on in the province of Alberta.

When I look at the words of the motion, however, the tough-talking leader of the Liberal Party who wants to reform every-

thing and challenge the government with this whip of a motion because he wants to whip the Government House Leader and the Opposition House Leader into free votes, what he's come up with here is a wet noodle. "The Assembly urge the House leaders of each of the party caucuses to undertake not to impose . . ." Well, that's not the whip that he's trying to impose on everybody else here. This is a namby-pamby, wet noodle sort of motion, hon. leader of the Liberal Party. The only trepidation I have about supporting it is that I now understand it will encourage Liberal participation on the committee, Mr. Speaker, and I'm going to have to think about that one.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Highlands, on the amendment.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the amendment I'm with my colleague the Member for Vegreville. You see, the thing is this. If this is the amendment that we're asked to support, I think I'm going to agree to this amendment. I like the comments from the Government House Leader. I think we have to take this sort of amendment seriously. The reason we have to take it seriously is because of the wording. What it asks is for the Assembly – that is, all of us – to urge the House leaders, of whom I'm one and the hon. Deputy Premier who is sponsoring this motion is another, to undertake, which means to try, not to impose party discipline, which is out of our parameters because the Whips impose party discipline after caucuses vote on whether or not they want caucus solidarity.

So when I read this, I think: geez, this is a lawyer who drafted this? Boy, I never went to law school, Mr. Speaker. Gee, I only studied political science and economics, and I know that if I wanted to say . . .

Point of Order Screening of Amendments

MR. TAYLOR: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MS BARRETT: Get a citation.

MR. SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order.

MR. TAYLOR: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. That amendment was drafted by the staff here, and they can't . . . [interjections] Mr. Speaker, it is your staff that I'm talking about. They approved that, not ours. It is your staff, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Sit down.

Perhaps all members of the House would care to look at the comment the Chair made when this amendment was given to the House. The Member for Edmonton-Glengarry at that time said that the motion had been cleared by Parliamentary Counsel. The Chair intervened and said that no matter who has prepared or worked in co-operation in the forming of any amendment, it is the Chair that is the final arbiter whether a motion proceeds or not. But it is still incumbent upon each member, especially all members of this House who have been here long enough to surely know how, to draft a proper motion or amendment. No point of order.

Edmonton-Highlands, please continue.

Debate Continued

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's not my intention to speak long on this amendment. I think we should get to the

vote on this question overall. I would like to point out though, as I was saying, that I'm not a trained lawyer, and I know that if I wanted to draft an amendment based upon the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry's question to the Deputy Premier, I would have drafted it to say something like: the party caucuses agree not to impose party discipline, et cetera, et cetera. That reflects his oral comments. This amendment does not reflect what he said a few minutes ago. On the other hand, this is the amendment that the member is sponsoring.

I would like to express a little bit of surprise at blaming any staff member for the fault in any motion sponsored in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. If you ask a staff member to write you something – and we do on a regular basis – and it does not reflect your intended will, then you do the responsible thing. You go back to the staff member and say: "Tighten it. I want it more clear; I do not want it subject to a wider interpretation than dot, dot, dot." To imply that Parliamentary Counsel is part of this process I find despicable. Mr. Speaker, the Table officers work for all of us, and I say we applaud their work. Lord knows that right now they've got a lot of work on their hands, and they comply with every one of our requests every morning when we phone up. I don't ever want to see these people being blamed for work that might come out of an individual caucus that doesn't satisfy the member sponsoring the work.

9:30

MR. TAYLOR: You were the one that was insulting them.

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, I would like to clarify that what I said is this. I've only been in university for six years and I didn't study law, but I know how to draft a motion. I knew how to draft a tight motion even after having been in here one year, let alone two years. That was my point. I don't think that we can accept . . .

MR. TAYLOR: You insulted the Parliamentary Counsel.

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

MS BARRETT: I have never insulted the Parliamentary Counsel, Westlock-Sturgeon.

Mr. Speaker, my point is this: either we are asked to support the amendment that was written and distributed or we are asked to support a verbal interpretation of that amendment uttered about 10 minutes ago by the sponsor of the amendment. If it is the former that we are being asked to endorse, I for one – and I don't speak on behalf of my caucus now because we do believe in free vote – will support the amendment, but I will not support the verbal interpretation of the amendment as uttered a few minutes ago by the sponsor of the amendment. It is entirely different.

In closing my remarks, Mr. Speaker, in urging the Assembly to proceed with a vote on this amendment, I would suggest that the important work of this Assembly on this matter is yet to come. Let's get on with it and get it done.

MR. SPEAKER: Red Deer-North.

MR. TAYLOR: Ask the NDP how they're voting.

MR. SPEAKER: Red Deer-North has been recognized.
[interjection]

Red Deer-North.

MR. DAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A few short comments. First, I speak with a bit of fear tonight because I know that *Hansard* is operating. My constituents are going to see that I'm agreeing with the NDP, and that could cause some fear back home. Nevertheless, there's a greater issue at stake, so I'll run that risk.

First of all, if the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry is interested at all in a lesson in what it is to have a democratic caucus and not one that's whipped into place, then I would ask him to take the liberty to look at how our caucus operates. As a matter of fact, I could recommend to him an article, which I just read today, from the Alberta Chamber of Commerce, which uses this caucus as an example of democracy in action. It explains in great detail the democratic process of this caucus – which I won't go into, but I'm going to send a copy of the particular article to the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry – where every member's opinion counts and they are at total liberty to influence and to sway opinion within caucus on the issues as they arise. It's a very detailed article, and I appreciate the chamber taking the time to look at how it is done in our caucus here where consensus can be arrived at because good discussion can happen and freedom of expression can happen. As I understand, it sounds like it happens also in the NDP caucus.

I understand, Mr. Speaker, that in certain Liberal caucuses across the country the Premier doesn't even show up and most of the cabinet doesn't even show up, so I offer our caucus as an example. Anytime the member would like to sit down with me, I can go over some of those issues with him. We see it constantly in terms of freedom to vote within our caucus. All you have to do is look at the Order Paper. Look at the motions and the Bills put forward by private members, and you will see many that are not the official policy of this government. Private members are being allowed to express themselves freely and openly in this Legislature to their constituents and to the media. Town hall meetings are held around the province by members of this caucus, to which they invite various cabinet ministers to come and subject themselves to the questioning, to the scrutiny of their own constituents.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that in the time that I've been the government Whip I have never – I repeat, never – dared to insult one of our members by telling them how to vote. That thought can only come from an archaic Neanderthal mind, and I'll tell you that is not something that happens here, either from my point of view or from the point of view of our deputy Whip. That has never happened. Have I told members from time to time that they can't go to the bathroom because a vote is coming up? Yes. But have I told them how to vote on that particular vote? Never, and never will I.

Now, it's interesting that the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry in his comments on the amendment brought forward an example of a so-called democratic, free-vote thinking individual. I'd like to mention very quickly three issues. Albertans that I talk to bristle when they hear these particular issues. Just bear with me, Mr. Speaker, and you'll see where this is leading. Compulsory policy on bilingualism from coast to coast: most Albertans bristle at that, just from a practical point of view, nothing to do with what language is being discussed. Executive federalism coming from a centralist point of view: most Albertans bristle at that also. And the Charter of Rights and Freedoms: although the principles are respected, most Albertans bristle at the way those policies were foisted upon

Canadians and upon Albertans by a little cloister down in Ottawa. And who did the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry bring forward as an example of free-vote thinking? One of the individuals in Canada who most strongly supports these issues more than any other person in Canada, Mr. Clyde Wells. He brings him forward as an example of how to conduct a free vote? Now, that's a joke.

The Member for Edmonton-Glengarry in his comments suggested that our members on the task force have already had it dictated to them what position they're going to put forward before the hearings have even happened. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that that is an insult of the highest order. It shows total disregard for one's colleagues within this House. It was either intended as an insult or it came just as an expression of sheer and total ignorance as to how intelligent elected people operate. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you without a word of exaggeration that I just see that as an insult of the highest order. I wouldn't even deem that upon the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry that he would tell his members how to handle a situation before they'd even heard from their constituents. I reject that totally. Then he says a free vote has to happen. I'll tell you what our members are free to do on this task force. They're free to go and listen to Albertans. He's talking about a free vote. We're talking about listening to Albertans. That's what this task force is all about.

You know, it's very interesting. This amendment coming forward actually is encapsulating the way in which Liberal policy is developed. It happens every time like this. First what happens is that out of desperation the leader picks an issue out the air. That's step number one, and you can apply it to this amendment coming forward. Next, like Stephen Leacock's tragic comical character the leader flings himself onto a galloping horse and rides off madly in all directions, hoping to plough into some media people along the way so they might pick up the issue and try and understand that which he's snapped out of the air. Then he rushes to read the editorials and the various news commentaries to see how the issue is doing. Then he sinks in despair as he realizes how foolish the initiative is. Step five: he flings himself off his galloping horse to land with a thud in a nearby empty wheelbarrow. Next, he comes up with a weasely kind of way to get back onto the agenda but make it look like he was standing for something and make it look like there was some kind of valiant way back in. That's exactly what this amendment is. The amendment on its own can be argued, there's no problem with it, but we see what's happened. Follow that process through.

The member leapt onto that galloping horse in all directions saying, "We can't get involved with a process which means hearing from Albertans, which means having to sit with members of another party on the same committee and maybe being overshadowed by their example." No, no. They wouldn't deign to even think of that. When that whole thing has failed, when he's read the editorials even as late as today, which totally condemn this ridiculous position he's taken about staying off the committee, he now comes up with an innocuous little amendment that's really tough to say no to; it's not really a demand. Now they can try and save a bit of face and a bit of grace and come out and say: "They met our demands. We arm wrestled them down," with a totally innocuous amendment. Then what will he do? Well, he'll lead his straggling troops in a triumphant waddle out of the Assembly and say: "Look. We've accomplished it. We've achieved freedom for Albertans."

Mr. Speaker, we have promised freedom for Albertans. We are going out to listen on this task force, and it will not be my

part to tell another committee member or another House leader how they or any of their members should vote.

I just rest my comments with that, Mr. Speaker.

9:40

Point of Order Withdrawal of Amendments

MRS. OSTERMAN: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. On a point of order, Three Hills.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, *Beauchesne* 586 outlines that there is a procedure by which an hon. member can withdraw an amendment, and I would suggest that all of us in this House tonight view this procedure in a very serious way. We have had other words given to us that suggest a meaning other than those which appear in the amendment, as the hon. House leader for the Official Opposition has noted. I would suggest the hon. leader of the Liberal Party should think seriously about clarifying precisely his intent and potentially asking the House for unanimous consent.

MR. SPEAKER: Speaking briefly to the point of order, the Chair would recognize Edmonton-Glengarry.

MR. CHUMIR: It's not a point of order; it's a suggestion.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, thank you, hon. member. I didn't realize you were here in the Chair. Would you like to come up and put this on? I'm surprised you didn't learn a bit more from earlier in the day.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I've accepted it as a suggestion, and I'll speak to it when I sum up at the closing of the debate.

Speaker's Ruling Closing Debate

MR. SPEAKER: Forgive me, hon. member, but under Standing Order 25(2) you do not have the right of summation on an amendment. I'm sorry; so that opportunity's gone. Thank you.

Calgary-Buffalo.

Debate Continued

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Having listened to some of the so-called debate here, I'm impelled to invoke what is referred to as Mae West's advice to young people: grow up. Take a Valium, Edmonton-Highlands. There's nothing wrong with this amendment that's being proposed. [interjection] The member may be marrying a lawyer, but she isn't one yet. Party caucuses can't be bound by resolutions of this House. They can only be urged, and that's why motions on regular motions urge the government to take certain action. So we don't need the show.

This amendment has been approved by Parliamentary Counsel. There's . . .

MS BARRETT: As being in form.

MR. CHUMIR: It's approved in form. There's nothing wrong with that. Let's not get carried away with any suggestions that Parliamentary Counsel's been involved in any inappropriate manner.

Members of our caucus have certainly made very clear the feeling that I have after five years in the Legislature, and that is phenomenal unhappiness with the process both in this House and particularly in committee. It is often, and perhaps one might say more often than not, a real waste of time. The committee process, like almost everything in this House, is predetermined by the government. The majority on the government side acts in unison like Muppets. We've seen this in the heritage fund committee. I've seen it in the Public Accounts Committee. Indeed, one member on the government side one morning asked me specifically how I could stand what was going on in respect to the procedure in that Public Accounts Committee, the way in which that process was being manipulated by the majority. We even had one instance in there in which the Provincial Treasurer, the chief financial officer of the province, was designated to be number 16 of the list of departments to be reviewed, obviously far beyond the time during which the Treasurer could be heard during that particular session. On top of this, of course, we find situations in which there's no opportunity being proposed for this committee and on the Electoral Boundaries Committee for any minority opinion to be presented.

Mr. Speaker, I don't want to prolong this because most of the views that I have have been stated before by members and by myself on the record in committee hearings. I wanted to say, however, that it hasn't been easy for myself and other members of our caucus to take the position that we would not participate. It is not an easy move. We realize the importance of this committee, but we have had our problems with the committee process; we've had our problems with the way in which this particular committee process has been evolved. We have decided in our caucus that if we get this resolution approved, we are going to participate, because this is not an innocuous resolution. We consider the resolution to be tantamount to an undertaking by the respective caucuses to act in accordance with the votes of their members in the House. I can't easily imagine parties in this House voting for this resolution and then proceeding to put on the whips at a later period of time. If any party wanted to say no to that process after this resolution and amendment were approved in the House, well, it would be on their heads.

So we rely on the honour of the caucuses and the members of this House, although we of course relied unhappily on the honour of members of the New Democratic Party once with respect to having more speakers during the Meech Lake debate. So perhaps that's in error, but be that as it may, we're prepared to take that chance again. If this amendment is passed, we'll be there, and we hope that we do have an open and effective process in the interests of this country and of this province.

MR. BRUSEKER: I thought I would take the opportunity to enter the debate as well because there have been a number of interesting comments raised, and I thought I would address some of them. I was pleased to hear the comments from the Deputy Premier in his opening remarks on the motion, which subsequently led, of course, to the amendment before us. I was curious, Mr. Speaker, because it sounded very familiar. Then we had the deputy party leader for the New Democrats talking as well about where we're going with this particular committee.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of reasons and a number of concerns for this amendment. The reasons behind it, I think, can best be enunciated by an experience that I know the Member for Edmonton-Belmont and the Member for Edmonton-Highlands found at times to be very frustrating. That was the recent committee of which the three of us were members

together, that being the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries. Now, that experience was a very worthwhile experience. It is undoubtedly a worthwhile experience to go out and listen to Albertans to find out what they have to say. I do agree, and I believe the Member for Edmonton-Belmont was the first to say it, that all-party committees can in fact be a useful exercise. But there are problems. There are concerns, and this amendment attempts to address one of those concerns.

When I reflect back on the Electoral Boundaries Committee process, it was interesting that the Electoral Boundaries Committee hearing process was started with a motion in this Legislature which was passed by all members of this Legislature. The Deputy Premier opened the debate with the comments on page 1497 of *Alberta Hansard*, August 16, 1989:

I can't predict the future with certainty. I cannot predict the outcome of the deliberations of the select special committee as to what they may recommend by way of new legislation to deal with electoral boundaries.

Mr. Speaker, that sounded very familiar, I think, to what was said this evening, yet as it turned out, if you look back on the *Hansard* recordings of that particular committee, you'll find that the votes very often went government members voting together as a bloc and opposition members sometimes together and sometimes not. Of course, the end result was that the will of the government members was put through, and the decisions were made long ahead of time.

MR. FOX: Question.

MR. BRUSEKER: Now, the Member for Vegreville, of course, is calling for a question. I suppose he's tired of listening to things that are relevant and would prefer that I ramble as much as he did. If I listened to what he had to say, I was thinking that the next thing he was going to ask me to believe, after all the rhetoric that he provided, was that he had some oceanfront property on his farm in Vegreville that he was going to try and sell us. Nonetheless, Mr. Speaker, I do have a few points that I want to make.

9:50

The question has been asked: will we participate if this motion is passed? Yes, we will participate, but I do want to bring out a point that the Member for Edmonton-Highlands made, because I think it was a very valid point. I agree with her point, as strange as that may sound. It doesn't happen often, but in this case I did. That point that was made by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands, Mr. Speaker, was that we are willing to participate in a process that has real meaning, in a process that is going to go somewhere. If we feel that we are there just for window dressing, to legitimize something from which we were originally deliberately and pointedly excluded, then we will withdraw, because there would be no point in our being there. We would like to be there. We would like to be full members as much as the Deputy Premier has said that he wants Alberta to be a full member in the Senate and have a triple E Senate. Mr. Deputy Premier, we, too, would like to be full members on this, and that's why we have asked for this particular amendment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. BRUSEKER: I will be happy to sit down once I have finished my comments, thank you.

The Member for Red Deer-North in addressing this spoke about how wonderful his caucus was and made a number of

allegations that suggested we are not in agreement in our caucus, that we do not follow democratic principles in our caucus. Well, I can assure him that nothing is further from the truth. Having held up his caucus as being a paragon of virtue, I look forward to the invitation to attend a meeting of their caucus to see how, in fact, they operate. It would be an interesting exercise as well. So, Mr. Speaker . . . [interjections]

AN HON. MEMBER: There are no free memberships here.

MR. BRUSEKER: Even if the membership was free, I wouldn't take it, and I certainly wouldn't pay five bucks for it.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, the amendment before the House is not a frivolous amendment, as has been suggested by certain members. If it were a frivolous amendment, I'm sure that it would not have arranged for the members of the two opposing parties that have spoken to have their shorts in a knot, as seems to be the case, because they're singing a substantially different tune than what they did earlier on.

What this amendment says, Mr. Speaker, is that we feel very strongly about what it is we are saying here. We think that an issue that is as substantive, as important to Alberta and to this country as a revision of the Constitution of this country must be something that does not have party discipline imposed either implicitly or explicitly, as the Member for Red Deer-North alluded to.

We, of course, are in support of this, and I too shall support this and look forward to a committee that is open and agreeable to all parties.

Thank you.

MR. BRADLEY: Mr. Speaker, I wasn't going to enter into the debate, but the debate that has come forward tonight has made me rise to make a few comments.

It is very interesting, the positions put forward. On the one hand, we have an amendment moved by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry which states: "The Assembly urge the House leaders of each of the party caucuses to undertake not to impose party discipline." When I hear the interpretation of the amendment which was put forward by the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry and seconded by the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, that's not the interpretation they have of the words they're putting forward. They're suggesting that the Assembly should direct the House leaders to not impose party discipline. That's the interpretation I take from the words of the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry and the Member for Calgary-Buffalo. But, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the words before us, I support that because it urges the House leaders "to undertake not to impose party discipline," which is entirely different from the interpretation which I hear from the members opposite in the Liberal Party on the amendment which they put forward. I'm certainly prepared to undertake in terms of this Assembly, in the give-and-take, that it's reasonable for the Assembly to urge this undertaking rather than directing members of other parties to take a certain position.

There are a number of other interesting words that have come forward from the Liberals. Most recently the Member for Calgary-North West and other members of the Liberal Party suggested that in every committee of this House the government votes together, on every issue that comes forward in Public Accounts or in the Heritage Savings Trust Fund committee, Mr. Speaker. That is absolutely wrong. I have been in this House for 16 years – today is the anniversary – and have seen a number of times when members of the government side have

voted against their colleagues on issues before the Heritage Savings Trust Fund committee. If you go back in *Hansard*, the record is very clear on the number of times where members of this government caucus have taken different views from their colleagues on votes in a number of different committees of this House. The member has alluded to the most recent example, the Electoral Boundaries Committee, and I'm assured that different views were taken on a number of positions in the select Electoral Boundaries Committee by members of this caucus. If you look in terms of the Members' Services Committee, there have been votes in that committee on which members of this House have taken different positions. The notion that's being put forward here, that this government votes on every issue the same way, is not true. Those whips are not on, and there have been several examples of this in this Assembly and in committees of this Assembly, where members have taken different positions. So let's just clear that up.

Mr. Speaker, what is really interesting about this debate today is in terms of the rules of this House. The members opposite in the Liberal Party are trying to amend the rules of this House through a motion such as this amendment. If they wish to amend the rules of this House, the Standing Orders, the opportunity is there for them to put those motions on the Order Paper and move with those amendments to the Standing Orders. They're trying to circumvent the Standing Orders. They have talked about arrogance tonight in this Assembly. Mr. Speaker, I think the ultimate arrogance which is being shown is the contempt for the rules of this Assembly, which has been shown by the members opposite today on several occasions. They have consistently stood up in this House, moved motions, done a number of other procedural things from the Liberal Party which are against the Standing Orders. They are trying to amend the rules, they're trying to tell us how bad our rules are, and they don't even understand the rules of the House.

Mr. Speaker, getting back to the amendment, I think the amendment has been constructed according to the instructions that have been given to either their staff or to Parliamentary Counsel to structure this amendment. It's very clear in my mind. It says, "urge . . . to undertake." It does not say, "direct the House not to impose." I'm prepared to support the amendment as presented, not the interpretation of the amendment that has been given to us by the Member for Calgary-Buffalo or the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry. I support the motion as written, not the interpretation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: The question before the House – there's one slight editorial thing to be added to it. It would become item (10). It is this, as proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry, and these are the words:

The Assembly urge the House leaders of each of the party caucuses to undertake not to impose party discipline on members of their party in respect of the committee deliberations and decisions and in respect of the ultimate disposition of the committee report in the Legislature.

[Motion on amendment carried]

MR. SPEAKER: On the main motion, the Chair recognizes the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

10:00

MR. ANDERSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak in favour of the motion now

before the Assembly. I might say that I think I'm in a unique position in terms of having that opportunity in this Assembly inasmuch as I have served since 1979 on each of the committees this House has established in order to deal with constitutional issues: first in the 1981 constitutional discussions, then with regards to the Select Special Committee on Senate Reform, and now tonight with respect to this particular committee.

I might say, with respect to the amendment just passed by the Assembly, that I'm pleased if that indeed means we will have the participation of all members of this House. We've humorously joked back and forth throughout this debate. I along with others have made humorous comments in a partisan way from one side of the House to the other, but I agree with the House leader of the Official Opposition, who spoke of how important this is and how crucial a position for this nation we are now in. We have in the past year and a half seen in the world change which is unparalleled in the history of man. Germany is now one; there's no wall that divides it. The Soviet Union is in pieces and parts, and that nation which we once thought to be the moving, growing, Communist nation of the world is now questioning its very existence. In this country we have gone to war in that year, been part of a war in the Gulf and come home again. I mention those changes only because they're indicative of how rapidly the world is changing today. It is in that context that we now have an opportunity to look at the structure which keeps us all as partners in Confederation and asks the question of how that vehicle can best be designed to meet those needs of our changing times.

Mr. Speaker, I would say, and I believe it to be the case, that Canada as we know it today will not be the same Canada as we will experience five years from now. It cannot be, because the times have changed. Our country has evolved. Its people in its different parts now need to take a look at that vehicle to determine what is best for us. It is particularly crucial, as representatives of this province, that we now ask Albertans to join with us in discussing what Canada, what form of nation, what opportunities and possibilities Albertans want in that Canada.

I am of the belief that we should not be asking as the fundamental questions: "Should there be more power to the provinces or should there be more power to the federal government?" or "Should Quebec have separate language questions?" or "Should Alberta have some other way to determine its distinctiveness?" Rather, our first and primary question should be: "What can be designed which will allow the diverse interests, the unique dimensions, and the great possibilities of this nation to be explored in this constitutional discussion to give us that great future that's possible for a country as a whole?" All of the other questions are part of that discussion. All of the other dimensions must be explored, but it should be done in the context of what is best for our nation, our future, and Albertans' place in that future.

Mr. Speaker, the hour is late. I don't intend to hold the House much longer in terms of my remarks, but I do think it is a historic occasion that we meet on. It is a turning point unlike any that I have seen in my 12 years in this Assembly. I believe that even though the debates of the '81 discussions, concluding with the '82 accord, were crucial, although I believe the Senate committee that you and I served on which crossed the country and set up the framework for a triple E Senate was crucial, there has not been, and perhaps there will not be again, a time when we are at a crossroads with corners as sharp as there are today, corners we can fall off or that we can turn to meet that new, great opportunity of the future.

As we embark on the work of the committee, I think it is crucial to again underline what the Government House Leader indicated: this is the open door. It is true that politicians throughout the country, I believe in the best interests, in an honourable way, tried to find a solution with the Meech Lake accord. We tried; we failed. It is now absolutely a requirement of each of us that we involve all of our citizens in the solution that must come, to deal with the issue of the future facing us now. I agree that there has to be flexibility in the time frame of the committee. I think it is important that we lead in discussion and not just respond to and follow discussion, because Albertans expect that of us. But we can only do that with the involvement of our citizens, with the good conscience of everybody here, with the involvement in a sincere and an honourable way from each corner of the House, from each corner of the province, from every part of the nation.

In that respect I am very pleased to support the motion and look forward to the difficult but challenging and exciting days that we will face as a committee and that those in this Assembly will face in terms of deciding what is best for the future generations of the nation.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been waiting patiently in my place for some hours to have an opportunity to talk about this great nation, Canada, and its future because I think that's what this debate ought to be about. Now that we've disposed of the Liberal monkey business, perhaps we can get on with that. Well, I would say it was worth the whole evening, just the look of panic on their faces when they realized that the Assembly was going to pass their motion. "Now what do we do?" Now what they do, I hope, is that they will come out of the weeds and get involved in a realistic way in the debate that's in front of us in terms of this great country that we live in.

Canada is a nation which is envied – I say "envied" – by people throughout the world for very many reasons. There may be others who enjoy greater material wealth, but there are very few who enjoy the great beauty and the unspoiled nature of many parts of our country, which is perhaps one reason why it hurts so much to see some of the mistakes that have been made in other parts of the world being repeated in our part of the globe. We have a deep and a caring tradition which is recognized around the world and in this country. I think the Spicer commission and many others who have probed the Canadian psyche find that caring and that sense of responsibility for one another is a deep part of what makes us feel is Canadian about us. I'm certainly proud of the part that the movement I represent has played in the creation of some of the manifestations of that, especially in medicare and some of our social safety network. We've had a tremendous reputation around the world as a peacemaker, as an upholder of the international law with a respect for peaceable relations among nations. I would have to say that some of the most recent actions by our federal Prime Minister as the gofer for the President of the United States cast a little pall on that, but all of these things are subject to change. I'd say finally that we have a less violent society, and we hope very much to keep it that way.

I was searching for a very brief way to describe the many things that have happened in the Canadian Confederation during my adult lifetime, and I couldn't find a briefer way than some remarks that were made by the national leader of the New Democratic Party to the federal council of the party on March 9 of this year, in which she referred to:

For almost 20 years beginning in the mid seventies with the Liberal government, there have been virtually no new major federal-provincial territorial initiatives to redress economic and social injustice. The Liberals abandoned national programs, promising victims of inequality and discrimination that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, by itself, would improve the human condition. Mr. Trudeau and Mr. Chretien were wrong.

Then along came Mr. Mulroney, who told Canadians that the biggest obstacle to justice, equality, and prosperity was the federal government itself: deregulation, privatization, the U.S./Canada trade deal. He's destroyed national institutions like the CBC and Via Rail. He's in the process of killing medicare and has virtually given up on regional development as a key tool to building national unity.

MR. SPEAKER: Extensive quotes, hon. member. I hope they'll soon be coming to an end.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, there are only two more sentences.

The constitutional record of the last two decades has been a legacy of exclusion rather than inclusion. In 1981 Mr. Trudeau and Mr. Chretien chose to exclude Quebec rather than take the necessary time to include Quebec. It was a mistake from which this country has never recovered.

Mr. Mulroney chose to exclude aboriginal and northern Canadians from his process. In both cases the exclusions doomed the process to failure.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I chose that quote because it says in a very few words what's happened to us over the past 20 years and why there is so much stress on the fabric of our nation today. I think you'd have to be blind, deaf, and inattentive in order not to realize that Quebec is on the verge of making an historic choice about its involvement in the future of our country. How do I know this? Well, I simply observe the behaviour of their Premier, Premier Bourassa, who is that very worst kind of Liberal, who jumps in front of every parade that comes along and tries to lead it. Now, when the Bourassa Liberals jumped with the Allaire report ahead of Belanger-Campeau, it became very, very clear that things had shifted and shifted markedly in the province of Quebec.

10:10

Now, we have to look at that in the stress of the last 20 years, in the absence of vision and leadership in our country, which is the reality that's in front of us. Now, I think when you look at our planet from space and you look at that very small part of it which is Canada – and every member of this Assembly has the opportunity to do that, not by going up in space but by going to the Space and Science Centre, where there's an IMAX film of our planet which shows exactly what the view is like from outer space. You see our country, Canada, which has so few of the environmental problems which are visible from space. In that film you can see very clearly how Lake Chad in the Sahara desert is drying up in front of the eyes of people who have been observing these things. You can see from space silt running off and pollution in the major river systems of the world, including the Mississippi, the Yangtze, and the Betsiboka in Madagascar. We in our country haven't suffered these problems to the same extent that they have around the world.

It doesn't mean we're immune. We have a situation just on the environmental front where we have 29 government mechanisms established to deal with one aspect of environmental issues alone. That's water. Twenty-nine different agencies. There was a fellow in town, Guy Doncier, who is a community development

consultant, who points out that trout's a provincial matter, salmon's a federal matter, oysters are provincial, and clams are a federal matter. Now, if we have Founding Fathers of the Constitution that carved things up that way, it's small wonder that we have a problem. I would hope when this committee comes to look at the future of our country, we look at the environmental imperative in a way that recognizes that we're not immune to the problems that exist around the world and that we look at an idea which has been talked about in this Assembly before, not simply from a provincial legislative point of view but from a national perspective. I'm talking about putting the protection of natural resources and the biological basis of human life and all life on our planet as a fundamental, personal right in the Constitution of our country.

I would like to read, again very briefly, Mr. Speaker, a draft which has been prepared by Bill Tilleman. Bill Tilleman, for those who don't know, was the counsel for the Al-Pac EIA Review Board, which held hearings in the province on that project. He did very good work in support of that committee. Even though the committee's recommendations were subverted by the government, I think the work should be recognized.

Speaker's Ruling Relevance

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, you're a long way from what this amendment's really about. We're well apprised of your concerns, but let's come back to what this is all about.

MR. McINNIS: The members don't understand what I'm saying, so I'll try and explain . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, take your place. I guess the Chair doesn't understand what you're doing. I'm sure you'll come briefly to the point about your concerns about the environment, but bring it back into the proper context of what this motion is.

Debate Continued

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The proposition is an amendment to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which is in the Constitution of our country, which is what this committee is to discuss. It's to be located within the Fundamental Freedoms clause. It says: consistent with principles of sustainable development, each person in Canada has the right to clean air, pure water, productive soils, healthy fish and wildlife, and to the conservation of the unique scenic, historic, recreational, aesthetic, and economic values of these and Canada's other natural resources; there shall be no public or private sanction which is capable of restricting these rights.

Speaker's Ruling Relevance

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. [interjection] Thank you, hon. member. For the last time, the last admonition, come back to this motion, or your right to speak will be taken away.

MR. McINNIS: Just on a point . . .

MR. SPEAKER: I'm sorry, hon. member. You've had direction from the Chair. Just get on with it.

MR. McINNIS: We're not on an amendment; we're on the motion, right?

MR. SPEAKER: I know. All right; we're on Motion 5. I'm glad that you know where you are.

Debate Continued

MR. McINNIS: It is the responsibility of Canada, and the various provinces and territories as public trustees, to safeguard these rights and benefits of present and future Canadians. That's the point, that it's time we talked with Albertans about putting that type of protection for our fragile environment in the Constitution of our country, right where it belongs, in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, under section 2, Fundamental Freedoms. That's the proposition I'm putting forward, and I think a proposition that is exciting enough that Albertans would like to discuss it even if members of this Assembly don't. I think this committee gives us an opportunity to do just that.

I would like to say that if what I heard this evening is correct, that the Liberal caucus is now going to stop hiding in the weeds and enter the constitutional debate, it will be an excellent opportunity for them to debate that proposition and to debate some of the ideas in this document, which I believe they published earlier this month, called *A Single Great Nation: A Discussion Paper of the Alberta Liberal Caucus on Constitutional Reform*. This document I describe as onward and forward to the status quo, because it's primarily a description of the way things are in this country, almost without exception with the vague hope that someone will come along and give them some ideas on how it should be changed. I believe that's what Albertans intend to do, particularly in this environmental area, where we have so much to account for and so much to achieve in the future.

With those few remarks and the kind indulgence of the Chair, I seek the support of the Assembly for this motion.

MR. CHIVERS: Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the resolution. The purpose of this resolution is to establish a process for consultation with Albertans about the constitutional future of Canada. I support the resolution for the simple reason that many Albertans and many Canadians have felt left out of the process of constitutional decision-making, and this resolution is designed in Alberta to go some way to rectifying that difficulty. I support the resolution. I applaud the fact that the Liberal caucus has decided this evening to join in that process.

In the process of the Meech Lake decision-making, it became quite clear that that process and the product was flawed as a result of the absence of a proper consultation process. There are many things that have to be decided in the constitutional decision-making process that we are about to embark upon. I trust that all members of this House that participate in this committee will do so with an open mind. I've heard comments from all sides of the House this evening urging participation in this committee. I take this opportunity to urge the people of Alberta to participate in this committee, to come before this committee and to give us their input. After all, that is the purpose of this process, and without the participation of Albertans from all over, people from all over the province of Alberta, this process is destined for failure. It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that it is the responsibility of all members of this House to urge Albertans to participate in this process.

There are many important and fundamental questions that must be addressed in this process. We have to make decisions

with respect to the balance between social and economic rights, the balance between cultural rights, balances between individual rights and collective rights, balances between the levels of government, including the governments in the north and the territories, the relationships between the central government and the regional governments. These are serious problems. We must also deal with the overlap and duplication between governments in the delivery of services. The question that we must address once the report of this committee is received by the House is: how do we get to the objective of amending the Constitution of Canada, and what sort of a process are we prepared to engage in in bringing about amendment to the Constitution of Canada?

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that constitutional reform must move slowly. I was encouraged by comments by members of the government tonight with respect to their concerns with respect to the speed of constitutional decision-making. I believe that Albertans and Canadians need time and an opportunity to reflect in order to set out the priorities, the balances that have been spoken of and discussed this evening. I believe that a participatory process is a slower process than the process of executive decision-making that was undertaken during Meech Lake. However, I believe that it is a desirable process to engage in, and I'm very much encouraged by the fact that all sides of this House have agreed to participate in that process.

Mr. Speaker, I support the resolution.

10:20

MR. HORSMAN: May I conclude the debate this evening, Mr. Speaker, with a few comments. I am very pleased indeed that the Liberal Party has given their undertaking to the Assembly to join this exercise of participatory democracy. I am very pleased, and I say this in all sincerity. I think it was a serious mistake on their part not to have joined in earlier. I had made it very clear that I hope it will be a nonpartisan approach throughout and that we can maintain that type of collegiality which is possible despite some considerable divergence of views. I assure members of the Assembly that this chairman – and I know that the vice-chairman, the hon. Member for Drumheller, will take the same approach. I point out that it is our intention in the public hearing process to divide the committee into two, to send those two committees throughout the province to seek out the views of Albertans in the broadest possible way.

The motion, which will be accepted, is that

Upon nomination by the Liberal Party caucus two additional members may be added . . . by resolution of the Legislative Assembly at any time before the commencement of the public hearings.

I would ask that such a resolution be prepared by the Liberal Party, and I am sure they will prepare it with a great deal of care to make sure it is absolutely proper and reflects their true intent, and that they will get it before the Assembly as soon as possible.

I can assure members of the Assembly that we are going about this process with a view to seeking out the views of Albertans, and we will hear a wide range of views. There is no doubt about that. You have, obviously, in a province of 2 and a half million people, people who believe very strongly in a central government and others who believe in a much looser type of confederal system. As I've said before, Mr. Speaker, we sing songs about the beauty of Confederation. In fact, we do not have a confederation; we have a federation. We'll be hearing more as we proceed through this task. It is, I suggest, one of the most important tasks ever assigned by this Assembly

to a select committee. I can assure you all and assure all Albertans that we are dedicated in total to fairness in hearing and fairness in judgment in this process.

Now, the Member for Edmonton-Glenarry was offended by some remarks I made back in August. Well, I want to tell him right here and now the reason that I was somewhat offended. I was offended by his remarks, which he had in a published document just a few days before, that set out a firm, fixed position relative to the Liberal Party's views on the future of Alberta in Canada. I was, I think it's fair to say, offended, but upon reflection I've decided that I will follow the admonition of the Rt. Hon. John Diefenbaker. He may not appreciate this, but I think it reflects my views very well when he said: while the light holds forth to burn, the greatest sinner may return. Well, Mr. Speaker, we welcome their return to the process, and I hope that will indeed be the opportunity now to put aside partisan feelings, partisan rhetoric, and partisan manoeuvring.

I must say that I am not entirely comfortable this evening in reflecting upon the debate that took place on the amendment. I know it has been passed now, but it seemed to me that having proposed the amendment and having had speakers support it from the government side and the Official Opposition, the Liberals became quite uncomfortable about the fact that it was going to be supported. Now, I just hope that that kind of atmosphere will not pervade the select committee process because if it does, it will not be because of the position taken

by the chairman or the members of the Conservative Party who are represented there and, I think fair to say, from the Official Opposition as well. [interjection] I know that the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark in particular was a little bit excited tonight and got carried away, but if he's a member of the committee, named by his caucus to participate, I think he will get to learn and understand much better as we move along that the process is designed not for partisan advantage but indeed to help Albertans and Alberta determine where we will be in this Canada of ours. That transcends every other feeling of partisanship or adversarial approach. The time for that is past. Let's move on to a new and brighter future together in this Canada and this Alberta of ours.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion before the House is number 5 as amended. Shall the Chair dispense with reading the motion?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

[Motion carried]

[At 10:28 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Wednesday at 2:30 p.m.]