

Canadian Constitution

stitution. I also believe congratulations are in order for the Minister of Justice. I believe that a good share of the credit should go to him for bringing about this meeting of minds. There should be an expression of appreciation extended as well to the deputy minister and other officials of the department, who are capable men and who have spent long hours working this out.

We as the nation's House of Commons should be a little more considerate of the men who are the attorneys general of these provinces and who have been able to come together with a tremendous amount of determination to work out an acceptable formula and agreement. I believe this is the attitude that most Canadians from coast to coast have today toward these men. There is no doubt their decision may not be the ideal, but I do believe that what has happened is all that could possibly have been hoped for at this time, and that the agreement has been reached in unanimity.

As I quickly looked over the communiqué and the announcement I found that three elements have been involved. One is the repatriation of the constitution, or the bringing to Canada of the British North America Act so that it can be our constitution. Second, there has been a spelling out of the amending formula. Since 1950 when this was first brought out in formal discussions this has been one of the stumbling blocks which has prevented agreement from being reached. Third, there has been provision for the delegation of power from federal to provincial governments and from the provinces to the federal government.

For the stability of a constitution it is imperative that there be some rigidity to the amending formula. The agreement reached regarding the delegation of powers provides for this, so that local needs can be met as far as the provinces are concerned without requiring or making constitutional change. I believe the agreement that has brought the formula to a basis where there must be four provinces in accord is one that gives us the assurance that there will be stability in this arrangement. I agree that we must study it very carefully, but on the other hand I believe that credit must be given where credit is due.

I am convinced that the past few days will go down as a landmark in the history of this nation, and I would hope will mark the beginning of a new era of unity and progress in which we will move forward. Many amendments may have to be made to the constitu-

tion other than those which have been agreed upon now, but with the bringing back to Canada of our constitution they can be done within the realm of our own autonomy and our own authority. Therefore I believe these days perhaps mark the beginning of a new era as we move forward in our ship of state, with consideration being given to the provincial governments and everything else that goes to make up confederation. Even though the ship may travel through stormy seas I believe we will be moving forward in the best interests of the nation and the progressive development of our Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Grégoire (Lapointe): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately I have not yet had time to analyse and study the release issued after the meeting between the provincial attorneys general and the Minister of Justice. I was unaware also that the Minister of Justice was to make a statement today in this regard.

However, there is at least one remarkable thing about this. From now on Canada will at least be able to amend its own constitution and, most important, we hope that the constitution will be amended in quite a radical way so that our country will adapt itself to the modern world.

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II stated in Quebec city that what could be normal 100 years ago should perhaps be amended or changed today.

There is no doubt for us that the constitution should be amended. Some radical changes must be made to meet the requirements of our modern times, the progress and development of Canada as well as the atmosphere prevailing in 1964 in our country.

I note that in the case of problems concerning a single province, any desirable amendment will be made after agreement between the federal government and the government of that province. We hope that in the case of the province of Quebec amendments will be made, while the other nine provinces will be left free to establish other relations with the federal government if they want to.

In my opinion, if the Canadian constitution allowed relations between Ottawa and Quebec to be different from those between Ottawa and the nine other provinces, such latitude or broadness of mind would lead to what everyone has been seeking for a long time, but has been unable to achieve, namely national understanding.