

**Mr. Chrétien:** Not true.

**Mr. Clark:** Those are matters of Canadian agreement, agreement on having our constitution home, agreement on the Vancouver formula as the way to work with that constitution once we have it home.

Unfortunately, in recent days the focus of attention in the nation has been on the disagreements which exist on constitutional questions, disagreements which are deep and which are in danger of becoming even deeper. But we should not let those serious disagreements obscure the fact that very real progress was made this summer, and that Canada is, for the first time in at least a decade, in a position where agreement exists as to both the necessity and the means of bringing our Canadian constitution home.

We in this party want Canada to act on that agreement, and our motion provides the instrument to let Parliament start the action to get the Constitution of Canada home so that Canadians can work with it.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Clark:** We are all aware in this House and throughout the country that discord and disagreement in Canada on how we should renew our federation grow worse with every passing day. We know that, with budget and energy policy coming, other deeply wounding controversies may well lie ahead of this Parliament and of this country. For the sake of our country, all Canadians must come together on common, solid ground. We must do it free of partisan recriminations, and we must do it free of any kind of narrow perspective.

On September 13 the first ministers' conference broke down. Now is not the time to assess blame for that; we have had enough blaming. It is time in this country for some building, building for Canada. To that September conference all the participants came with packages of reforms which they wanted. Obviously, it would have been the best thing for our country if a balanced, comprehensive compromise package of reforms and improvements in the constitution had been agreed on. But that did not happen, as the House knows. What did happen, however, was the emergence of the Vancouver consensus as a formula accepted in principle by virtually all of the participants in the closed session in September.

That formula allows amendments to the constitution, and allows them now, Mr. Speaker, not two years hence. It does not freeze the Constitution of Canada for two years, so that the people of Quebec, who might want more changes, are told, "No, you cannot have them for two years." It does not freeze our constitution for two years so that the people of western Canada who might want changes are told, "No, you cannot have them for two years; it is frozen." Instead, it gives us a means and an instrument by which we in this country can use and change our constitution right now. It is a device we can use today. It is not a device we must wait for two years to use.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### *The Constitution*

**Mr. Clark:** And as the House will know, that formula also protects the provinces of Canada, because it provides the fundamental guarantee that no province can be affected by an amendment unless it chooses to be affected. Thus does it reflect the essential partnership of Canada. Thus does it respect the essential nature of a federal system.

[*Translation*]

There is no ideal formula but that one has the decided advantage of having been approved, in the present context, by all the partners in federation. Given this approval in principle, it is time all partners set aside, for the time being, all the constitutional amendments they propose. It is time they join in bringing the constitution back to Canada so that the required changes can be effected afterwards by Canadians, in Canada. Let us ask the British Parliament merely to give us back our constitution with the generally accepted Vancouver formula. Let us make that happen quickly and let us then, without the intervention of another country, promptly update our federative agreement.

[*English*]

I cannot understand, Mr. Speaker, why the government insists on a procedure that would have Britain pass amendments to the Constitution of Canada instead of letting Canada pass amendments to the Constitution of Canada.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Clark:** Surely, Mr. Speaker, our constitution is our business. We should be dealing with our constitution here in Canada and we should not be waiting two years, we should be doing it now. What is so tragic about the way we are proceeding is that the Government of Canada not only wants the British to change our constitution but wants us to be prevented from working with our constitution for at least two years. Neither of those is acceptable to me. I am a Canadian, I want to have my constitution here.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Clark:** I see no reason to wait. I see no reason to put in an unnecessary two-year delay, because we can have our constitution home quickly, we can have an amendment formula agreed to quickly, and we can do it quickly. If this motion is accepted, the will of Parliament will be clear. The will of the premiers is already clear; they accepted in principle the Vancouver consensus when they met in September.

**Mr. Chrétien:** Not true.

**Mr. Clark:** The Minister of Justice says that is not true. But he knows that is true.

**Mr. Chrétien:** Ask Bill Davis.

**Mr. Clark:** He suggests that we ask the Premier of Ontario. The Premier of Ontario indicated, in the last 15 to 20 days, that he is prepared to accept the Vancouver amending formula.