

Government Orders

country. That is the real issue. This commission ought to have such a mandate.

[*Translation*]

What level of government can better fulfill the needs of all Canadians whether they live in this or that province, or in either of the Territories? What jurisdiction can better meet the needs of our fellow citizens? We feel this is where the challenge lies. We are now faced with major difficulties everywhere in Canada.

[*English*]

In summary, let me offer the following: The Liberal Party is willing to support the government's motion to create a special joint Senate-Commons committee to consult with Canadians and inquire into and report upon the process for amending the Constitution of Canada. We are supportive of this motion, in principle. However, we do have certain concerns and misgivings. We support this resolution because we are actually trying to help in a non-partisan way the Prime Minister to get out of this difficulty, this mess that he has created, because we truly want to work co-operatively to help Canada and Canadians.

• (1210)

We in the Liberal Party are willing to put aside partisan politics to work for the future of Canada. We are indeed, my hon. colleague, and I would hope that other hon. colleagues representing other *formations politiques* would be willing to do the same.

Some of the shortfalls of the mandate of the proposed committee are, as I indicated—

[*Translation*]

—much too narrow a mandate. I suggest we should look into the amending formula and that this process should give rise to a number of other questions, but I feel nevertheless that shared powers is truly the key issue.

Why do we support this government's decision to create such a committee? It is very simple. We are trying to help in a co-operative and non-partisan way the Prime Minister to get out of this constitutional mess that he has created and we also do want to help the Canadian

people. We are willing to work all together for the future of Canada. There is no other reason.

But let us not forget that if, in the end, the Canadian people, whether Natives, Francophones, Anglophones, new Canadians, do not feel they really belong in this great country, if they feel that they cannot participate fully in the decision-making process, in the economic, social, cultural and linguistic life our society, if each region does not feel fully integrated, we will have failed.

[*English*]

Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that we are debating this motion today. I know that it was the government's intention to avoid having this motion debated and that the Liberal Party was willing as well to forego a debate on this issue. But with this proposed committee we are talking about the Constitution of Canada. Parliament must be involved. Canadians must be involved and Canadians must be kept informed. My party is committed to these principles and that is why we forced this debate today.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Ms. McLaughlin: Mr. Speaker, we oppose the government's motion for several reasons. Let me say at the outset that opposition to this motion is not opposition to constitutional renewal. Quite the contrary. We are opposed to this motion because we want substantial, meaningful constitutional initiatives. The proposed committee offers a one-dimensional response to a profound national crisis. It is an incomplete answer to a large and complex issue. The issue, the question, is what kind of Canada do we want to create and how do we create it?

This committee is being formed to discuss how we can get there, but nothing about where we want to go. We should begin by identifying some of those basic principles for a nation with a vision, a nation that knows where it wants to go.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Ms. McLaughlin: My vision and my party's vision for this nation is based on the principles of a commitment to social justice, a recognition that we have a responsibility to care for each other.