

*The Constitution*

the Spicer commission but also from the Beaudoin-Edwards committee that came before the committee that I co-chair.

That is why there are 28 proposals on the table. We have heard criticisms that that is too much. First of all, I have to point out that not all of the 28 proposals are constitutional proposals. Some of them are instructions to the committee about the fact that we should do certain things and we should look into certain things. Some of them are intentions that the government has expressed about legislation that it intends to enact and it asks for advice on that legislation. One of those items, for instance, is reform of the Bank of Canada Act which would be accomplished merely through an act of the House of Commons.

You cannot have it both ways. When we went through the Meech Lake hearings, people were saying: "You didn't include us, you didn't count us in. Because this is the Quebec round, this is an exclusionary process and we want in". We heard that from aboriginal people, women, people who come from ethnic communities, people who are physically disadvantaged, and so on.

This 28 proposal package is an attempt to respond to all of the concerns that we have been hearing over the past two years. I suppose in the final analysis, the essential items that have to be dealt with according to the timetable that we have before us now are the ones that will be dealt with by the First Ministers when it comes time for them to begin to negotiate the final results of the committee's deliberations.

For the time being, it is very important that all of the options are there for the First Ministers to examine. These are things that Canadians have been telling us. For example, in the west, they have been saying that they feel alienated. Therefore, they want some fundamental change to the system so that they will feel included in the decision-making that emanates from the centre of the country.

It is important to make sure that we leave all of the proposals as wide open as we can so that First Ministers can make their decisions accordingly. However, there are three issues that concern us all very much. We must respond to Quebec because we have been dealing with this question for many many years. Surely after 10 years of having repatriated our Constitution, it is time to do

the generous thing and respond to the minimal requirements of Quebec in order to become part of the Constitution of Canada.

I know that at all of the hearings we have held across the country, people responded very favourably to the idea that Quebec could be included as a distinct society, as represented by its culture, its French language and its civil law. I do not believe if you were able to take a vote of the people who are aware of the issue, who have studied it and thought about it, that you would find many were opposed. It reminds me of some of the more emotional issues that have been before this House where 25 per cent of the people are violently on one side of the issue and 20 per cent are violently on the other side of the issue. The vast middle majority say: "Please, find a reasonable accommodation somewhere down the centre, get it fixed and get on with it". This is true of the constitutional issue and it is true also of some of the more controversial issues in this particular round.

There is a deep desire to resolve the issues that are outstanding for aboriginal people, at least some of them on this round even if we do not get to them all. We should remember that constitutions are not things that are finite. They are never completed. They grow and evolve with the needs of society at that particular time. Of course, we must respond to the feeling of western alienation.

In addition our institutions, the parliamentary reform process about which we heard Mr. Brewin talk earlier, is an integral part of what we are doing. If we do not respect each other as parliamentarians, if we do not learn to listen carefully to what our colleagues are saying, listen with concern and believe they have a valid point, it is very difficult for Canadians to believe that they should respect us. If we have lost some respect perhaps it is time to look into our own hearts and see how we can reform our own conduct to ensure that we reestablish that respect for this particular institution in Canadians all across the country.

I suppose that it is no secret that there will be changes to the constitutional proposals when the committee makes its report. I think that it is a very positive thing for this country and for this government. They are after all proposals and they were put on the table so that people would have a foundation of discussion, a basis upon which to carry on the discussion.