

(b) the recognition that Quebec constitutes within Canada a distinct society.

You seem to be saying that Quebec does constitute a distinct society, but so do other groups. Are you saying that, because there are other distinct societies within Canada, Quebec should not be singled out? Or are you saying that, because there are other distinct societies within Canada, they should all be included in the Constitution amendment? I am not clear on your position. You understand that we have to take into consideration the representations made by you and others. It would be neither expected nor helpful of us simply to say, to quote you, "We recommend that the term 'distinct society' be defined in the Accord." We would have to say how. Therefore, what I am trying to find out from you is: Do you think that we should take out the statement that Quebec is a distinct society, because there are other distinct societies, or do you suggest that we should add those other distinct societies and say that the Constitution should be interpreted on the basis of Quebec being a distinct society, of so and so being a distinct society, and so on? Should we take it out, leave it in, define Quebec more clearly, or add the others? What is your recommendation?

● (1540)

**Mr. Corn:** We feel that it should stay as it is. Quebec should elaborate what it is and what it means, and multiculturalism should be added in section 2. Quebec is a distinct society, but there are many other distinct societies. It would mean that there are other distinct societies which are recognized on the same level.

**Senator Frith:** Then your answer is that we should recommend the section to read:

The Constitution of Canada shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with . . .

(b) the recognition that Quebec constitutes within Canada a distinct society, that so and so constitutes within Canada a distinct society, that such and such within Canada constitutes a distinct society, . . .

and so on. Is that how you think we should do it?

**Mr. Corn:** No. I do not believe that those kinds of changes should be made. Let us accept Quebec as being a distinct society, and let them establish some kind of formula on what it is, or specify it. By adding multiculturalism, then multiculturalism, by a kind of back door, automatically comes into other distinct societies. But I would not like to see in the act many distinct societies. That cannot be done.

**Mr. Binavince:** As I understand the council, there is no fundamental objection to the question of Quebec's being a distinct society. The only question concerns the definition. It is the feeling of the council that Quebec can best define what kind of society it is. That is why our recommendation does not touch on section 2(1)(b). All that it proposes is a paragraph that will address the question of fundamental characteristics. The council accepts that Quebec is a distinct society, and when the time comes when we have to decide how that should be defined, in our submission, the people of Quebec are best

[Senator Frith.]

qualified to tell us what kind of society it is; and they should come forward, if they want to put it in, in order to make it more explicit in section 2. We have no way of offering to you a definition. The suggestion the council is making as a practical amendment is addressed to section 2(1)(a), namely, that one of the fundamental characteristics of Canada is multiculturalism. It is not only what is contained under (1)(a).

**Senator Frith:** I will come back to (1)(a) in a moment. So far as (b) is concerned, you say that—

**The Chairman:** Senator Frith, I do not want to cut off your questions, but I should point out that I have three other senators who wish to speak, and our time is short. Perhaps you could make your question concise. Please finish your questioning.

**Senator Frith:** I am trying to make it concise. A precise question is shorter, but so is a precise answer.

**The Chairman:** But I have a time problem.

**Senator Frith:** I understand that. Let me ask a question concerning (a). It will be a fairly precise question, but I cannot guarantee the precision of the answer, of course. Section 2(1)(a) says:

(a) the recognition—

This is another way in which the Constitution has to be interpreted:

—that the existence of French-speaking Canadians, centred in Quebec—

and so on

—constitutes the fundamental characteristic of Canada;

I understand that you do not feel that that is a proper or sufficiently full definition of what is the characteristic of Canada. The Honourable Charles Caccia agrees with you, and he appeared before us with a definition that he felt would be a better description of contemporary Canada than is contained in section 2(1)(a). My precise question is: Do you know about that definition and do you agree with it?

**Mr. Corn:** Quite frankly, senator, I read what Mr. Caccia said, but I cannot recall everything exactly. But I know that when I read it I agreed with him basically.

**The Chairman:** Thank you, Senator Frith. Honourable senators, I have three names on my list: Senators Bosa, Argue and Haidasz. We should be coming to the next group of witnesses in about five minutes. Therefore, I ask my colleagues to limit their questions. I now call on Senator Bosa.

**Senator Bosa:** Mr. Chairman, I will try to be as brief as possible. I am not sure whether it was Mr. Corn or Mr. Binavince who made reference to section 27 of the Constitution Act, 1982, stating that there was no substance in that section regarding multiculturalism. I was one of two people who fought very hard for that section. I refer to Mr. Laurence Decore, the present Mayor of Edmonton. I was surprised to hear that reference made. Could you elaborate a little on that?