

Business of the House

The *FFHQ* and other groups told us that it was essential to maintain a strong French culture in Quebec. Mr. Décary stated: "If Canada wants to protect the French element of this country, the province having a French-speaking majority should be given the political and legislative tools needed to promote its language, its genius and its civilization." He added: "Without Quebec, the French culture elsewhere in Canada would be an illusion." However, no one, except Mr. Trudeau ever suggested that it would give Quebec new constitutional powers. Messrs. Beaudoin and Lederman, among others, have clearly stated the opposite. The role of Quebec, as Mr. Beaudoin said, should remain within shared competences. It does not change Sections 91 and 92. It does not give Quebec extraterritorial power nor any mandate to act in a jurisdiction at other government levels. I do not see how the other provinces or the federal Government would have anything to fear.

● (1130)

[English]

I see progress in this Constitutional Accord. I see progress for Quebec and for francophone minorities. I see progress for linguistic duality and for acceptance of our policy on official languages. Many, if not the majority, of the witnesses heard by the committee, share my view. It is not perfect in the sense that we could have done more. However, politics is the art of the possible and the heart of compromise. When I say the art of the possible and the art of compromise, it is perhaps even more true when it comes to constitutional matters. I do not believe that anyone who has participated in the constitutional negotiations, including Mr. Trudeau, can say otherwise.

I am sure that the Charter of Rights with the notwithstanding clause, Section 33, is not the type of full, air-tight protection of fundamental rights that the former Prime Minister wanted. The circumstances of the moment forced him to accept section 33, but he did not reject the Charter because of it. No. Instead, he chose to move forward with the Charter because a Charter with section 33 was better than no Charter at all.

The agreement reached on June 3 was also a compromise, but a less dramatic one. Still, I do not consider it a step backward. I see no danger for francophones or for anglophones.

[Translation]

I see progress in this Agreement, Madam Speaker, progress for Quebec and for francophone minorities. What I find deplorable, however, as a representative of New Brunswick in this House, is that during the current electoral campaign in New Brunswick, one of the provincial party leaders is threatening to destroy the Meech Lake Accord under the pretext that, if he becomes premier of New Brunswick, it would be with the mandate of re-opening the Meech Lake negotiations.

I am speaking about the leader of the New Brunswick Liberal Party, Mr. McKenna, who is telling two things to the

people of New Brunswick, to Acadians and to women. First, as he knows quite well that the Acadians recognize that Richard Hatfield was an architect of the Meech Lake Accord with the Canadian Prime Minister and that Mr. Hatfield has been promoting and protecting the rights of Acadians in New Brunswick for a long time, Mr. McKenna, the leader of a political Party, to attract the votes of Acadians, is now going through the province and telling people: A vote for me is a vote to re-open and amend the Meech Lake Accord. When he is asked why, he speaks about the rights of women, francophones and the native people, but what he does not say to the people of New Brunswick is what he will do exactly. He says that he will re-open the Accord, but he does not tell the people of the province why. At least, we know where the federal Liberal Party stands. The federal Liberals have proposed amendments saying that these amendments deal with fundamental issues, but that if these amendments are not accepted, they will still support the 1987 Constitutional Accord, which Mr. McKenna refuses to do in New Brunswick.

He is asking the people of New Brunswick, including Acadians and women, for a blank cheque. He asks them to send him to Ottawa, but without telling them what he will do. When such a major issue is involved, Mr. Speaker, you cannot give a blank cheque to someone who does not have the guts to tell the people of New Brunswick whether or not he will really destroy the Meech Lake Accord.

This is an important issue because I would not want the people of New Brunswick, including the Acadians, to be isolated from the rest of this country by the petty political action of a leader who is only trying to attract a specific group of voters in New Brunswick.

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[English]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

DISPOSITION OF CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of State and Minister of State (Treasury Board)): Madam Speaker, there have been discussions among the Parties, and I think that you will find there was unanimous consent for the following order to be moved immediately:

That consideration of the motion of the Minister of Justice for amendments to the Constitution of Canada (Government Orders, Government Business, Number 14) shall be conducted as follows:

(1) No later than 6:00 p.m. on Thursday October 1, 1987, the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the New Democratic Party, or a member of their respective Parties acting on their behalf, may each give notice of a motion incorporating amendments described in addendum A and B, respectively, of the report of the Special Joint Committee on the 1987 Constitutional Accord, tabled in the House on September 21, 1987, and, when the said Government Order is next taken up on a subsequent sitting day, the Speaker shall, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice, declare these motions to have been duly moved and seconded;