

*Government Orders*

The whole purpose of having this bill proclaimed into law, as I hope it will be soon, is to be able to use the device of a referendum if absolutely necessary. Mackenzie King was quoted just a moment or so ago, and I would say a referendum if necessary, but not necessarily a referendum, to paraphrase that Canadian statesman.

As colleagues have said, there was very detailed discussion in committee. The bill does not say a referendum must be held or how it should be interpreted. There were 29 amendments proposed in committee. Thirteen of those were accepted in committee or at report stage, and as my hon. friend from Papineau—Saint-Michel has said, seven out of the twelve were Liberal amendments.

It is correct, as the hon. House leader was saying, that there are rather strict limitations on what can be done in the context of 1992 as opposed, for example, to 1980 in the sense we are operating within the atmosphere of a charter today. The freedom of association issue as well as the freedom of speech issue have to be dealt with.

If there are to be umbrella committees that happen voluntarily then that is fine. They presumably would work if they were made to work, but it is our belief to mandate them would be unconstitutional and in some ways perhaps absurd.

With reference to the consultation on the question, I would like to point out not only did we provide a public undertaking to consult the leaders of the recognized parties in the House as opposition parties had requested, but we went a step further. We made that commitment in the bill itself, so it is required now by law as well as by moral commitment, or will be when the bill is proclaimed.

On the issues of financing and the definition of expenses, we have taken the concerns of Canadians into account and have gone a step toward the aboriginal peoples of Canada to make sure the text of the question will be available where appropriate in aboriginal languages.

• (1240)

I would like for a moment to deal with the proposed amendment which was defeated last night and which had

been offered by my hon. friend, the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore. It is an issue that has puzzled a number of people. What is the appropriate word to describe what we have before us? Is it a plebiscite or a referendum?

Some study on the issue indicates that the word “referendum” and its French equivalent *référéndum* are much more widely understood and accepted, at least in Canada, than the words “plebiscite” and *plébiscite*. That is particularly the case in the French language. The French word *plébiscite* is usually given a different meaning. The Quebec legislation which is *la Loi sur la consultation populaire* uses the term *référéndum*. Using another term in the federal legislation might lead to confusion. To avoid this confusion we might have to use the word *référéndum* in French even if we agreed to the change proposed by my friend, the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, in the English version of the bill. While that may be technically correct in French, it might lead to a different type of confusion which we would all like to avoid.

I had the opportunity to meet an international expert on referendums, Professor Francis Delpérée of the University of Louvain in Belgium. He has put together one of the most definitive works on the subject. It is titled simply *Référéndum* and has several articles from many countries that have had referendum experience.

I will quote from the Canada section of that work. The article was written by our distinguished colleague from the other place, the hon. Senator Gérald Beaudoin:

*[Translation]*

There are several types of consultative or deliberative referendums. In the first, the people are consulted; in the second, the people participate in the legislative process. Furthermore, the referendum can be optional or required. In Canada, because the Constitution is silent on this point, referendums are optional.

*[English]*

In other words, the word “referendum” is used in the article by Senator Beaudoin exclusively. He, I submit, is one of the resident authorities.