to agree on such relatively simple matters as who are appropriate for the Senate and who are appropriate for the Supreme Court.

The Accord also accords the provinces an increased involvement in immigration. There are some concerns in this regard, but I think they are largely met by the requirement that these agreements must be enacted in law by the Parliament of Canada and that these agreements are ruled by the Charter of Rights.

Further, there has been a great deal of concern over spending power. There is a provision in the Accord that if the federal Government enacts legislation in an exclusively provincial jurisdiction, the provinces will have the option of opting out or having funds provided to them so long as the programs enacted are consistent with national objectives. I would interpret that as a step forward because we are talking about provincial jurisdiction. For the first time a recognition of the right of the federal Government to be involved under certain conditions in areas of provincial concern is being inserted in the Constitution. Those who fear that we will be unable to have day care and so on should be assured.

Of course there are problems with the amending formula. Surely it is clear that the amending formula, as it provides for unanimity among First Ministers and all Governments in respect of the recognition of new provinces from the territories and in respect of the changes in the Senate, imposes an unnecessary rigidity on the Constitution. I would suggest that the Accord be amended in respect of the application of the amending formula to the admission of new provinces, because it is an insult to the North and deprives the North of rights which it should share with the rest of Canadians.

While the Senate may remain unchanged, at best it will become even more irrelevant, and its very irrelevancy may compel various Governments to propose changes in a unanimous fashion to make it more in accord with a democracy.

Of course the core of the Accord is the recognition of the distinctive character of Quebec and the dual linguistic character of Canada. This is where the trouble begins. There are considerable doubts about the impact on the Charter of Rights. Among these rights are the rights of sexual equality.

I would plead for time to say a few more words, because I think it is important that I have the opportunity to do so.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed that the Hon. Member have a few more minutes within which to complete his speech?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. McCurdy: Mr. Speaker, there has been a great deal of concern about the recognition of two singular aspects of Quebec society—the recognition of the responsibility of the Government of Quebec both to preserve and to promote the French language, and the recognition of the responsibility of Parliament to preserve the French character and French minority outside Quebec. They are important but they raise considerable fears. Among them are the fears of women that sexual equality will be compromised, particularly with specific reference in the non-abrogation clause to aboriginal peoples and to the multicultural nature of the country.

I do not believe that sexual equality rights are abrogated or affected in any significant way, nor do I believe that there is any material change of the rights of minorities as a result of the distinctive character clause. Nothing has changed—nothing has been made better; nothing has been made worse.

It must be said, in respect of the real character of the country, that the failure to make firm provision for providing self-government to the aboriginal people is a serious oversight that must be corrected.

The main concern which must be addressed is not what the Accord does now but what must be done in the future. Earlier I talked about the message, the message in the Accord to a third of the population—the blacks, the Ukrainians, the Poles, the Italians, the Chinese, the Pakistanis, the Czechoslovakians, and the variety of other people who compose my riding—that they are not really an inherent part of the country. There is still the recognition inherent in all that has happened that there is some primacy to the two founding people. As long as that message is maintained, the country cannot be whole. As long as it is not recognized that the multicultural character of the country is as fundamental as anything else, the country cannot be whole. As long as the rights of the minorities guaranteed in Section 15 of the Charter of Rights are subject to an override, to the whim of Governments, it is in complete contradiction to the function of the Charter. It cannot be accepted as long as it exists because it implies that those of us who are neither English nor French are not really a part. Just as there was unfinished business after 1982, there is unfinished business now. It is unacceptable to me and all others, whether of French or English extraction, that we should in any way be considered as second class citizens.

• (1330)

You can say that Quebec was a part of the Constitution even after 1982 just as you can say that the minorities are part of the Constitution after 1987. However, just as the Constitution of 1982 was over the heads of the people of Quebec, an accord that recognizes Quebec as it has to, as it must, and as we approve of it, leaves unanswered the pleadings of the third portion of this country. The first priority must be to ensure that just as Quebec was welcomed into the Constitution so should those of us who are neither French nor English be welcomed into the Constitution.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean Charest (Minister of State (Youth)): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I must admit that not so long ago, in fact it was three years ago, not many of us expected to have the opportunity and the privilege to debate a motion in the House of Commons that for all practical purposes would bring Quebec within the Canadian constitutional fold. In 1984, we