

Constitutional Accord

[Translation]

Mr. Lewis: Madam Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): The question mentioned by the Parliamentary Secretary has been answered. Shall the remaining questions stand?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

● (1220)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

1987 CONSTITUTIONAL ACCORD

ESTABLISHMENT OF SPECIAL JOINT COMMITTEE

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Hnatyshyn:

That a Special Joint Committee of the Senate and of the House of Commons be appointed to consider and report on the "1987 Constitutional Accord, signed in Ottawa on June 3, 1987, by the First Ministers of Canada", copies of which were tabled in the Senate and the House of Commons on June 3, 1987;

That twelve Members of the House of Commons and five Members of the Senate be the Members of the Special Joint Committee, such Members on the part of the House of Commons to be designated no later than seven sitting days after the adoption of this motion;

That the Committee have the power to appoint from among its Members such sub-committees as may be deemed advisable, and to delegate to such sub-committees all or any of their powers except the power to report directly to the House;

That the Committee have power to sit during sittings and adjournments of the House of Commons;

That the Committee have power to send for persons, papers and records, and to examine witnesses and to print such papers and evidence from day to day as may be ordered by the Committee;

That the Committee be empowered to authorize television and radio broadcasting, as it deems appropriate, of any or all of its proceedings or of proceedings of its sub-committees, pursuant to the principles and practices governing the broadcasting of the proceedings of the House of Commons;

That the Committee submit its report not later than September 14, 1987, provided that, if the House is not sitting, the report will be deemed submitted on the day such report is deposited with the Clerk of the House of Commons and with the Clerk of the Senate;

That substitution be authorized, for Members from the House of Commons, from a list of alternates to be provided to the Joint Chairmen of the Special Joint Committee by a representative of each party at the first meeting of the Committee, such list of alternates to contain no more than twice the number of Members of the House of Commons who are Members of the Special Joint Committee representing each party in the House;

That the quorum of the Committee be eight Members, whenever a vote, resolution or other decision is taken, so long as both Houses are represented, and that the Joint Chairmen be authorized to hold meetings, to receive evidence and authorize the printing thereof, when six Members are present so long as both Houses are represented; and

That a message be sent to the Senate requesting that House to unite with this House for the above purpose, and to select, if the Senate deems it to be advisable, five Members to act on the proposed Special Joint Committee.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Madam Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise on behalf of our Party today to support the motion before the House to establish a Special Joint Committee of the Senate and of the House of Commons

to hold public hearings this summer on the Meech Lake Accord.

[Translation]

It is with pleasure, Madam Speaker, because we endorse the Meech Lake Accord, as do the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Turner) and the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and his Party. It is good to have the consensus of the three Parties here in the House in the case of such an important process. I support the resolution before the House for two reasons.

[English]

First, I support the motion before the House because it will give us an opportunity as Members of Parliament to explain the Meech Lake Accord and promote a better understanding of the Accord to people across the country. I think that is important because it is a complicated document which has ramifications that will affect the lives of Canadians, not just today but for many years to come.

Second, and even more important, I support the resolution before the House to establish a Special Joint Committee because I believe that the people of Canada need some input into constitution-building. Constitutions are not just for Prime Ministers, premiers, Members of Parliament or members of Legislative Assemblies. They are for the people of Canada from all the provinces that make up this great nation.

I want to see as much positive input as possible in suggesting some positive changes to the Accord that is before us. I also hope that all 10 provinces will hold hearings, as the Province of Quebec has done and as I understand the Province of Manitoba is obliged to do so that we may have a provincial and national perspective and the resolutions of the House of Commons and Senate, and the resolutions from the provincial legislatures will be the result of input from all Canadians in this diverse country. We will have a constitution about which we will feel proud as we take this country into the 21st century.

[Translation]

Madam Speaker, I remember very well that five or six years ago we had another special joint committee of the House and the Senate of Canada studying the Canadian Constitution. I sat on that committee with the Hon. Member for Burnaby (Mr. Robinson) and I remember quite vividly that we had hearings during two or three months in late 1980 and early 1981. It was a good committee. There was good participation not only by Members of the House, like co-chairman Serge Joyal, but also by senators, particularly Conservative Senator Arthur Tremblay and Liberal Senator Jack Austin.

We had another experiment with a joint committee of the House and the Senate two years ago. Yesterday I spoke with my colleague the Member for New Westminster—Coquitlam (Ms. Jewett) and she told me the sittings took place in the summer of 1985, the joint committee on Star Wars and bilateral trade between the United States and Canada. Again it proved to be an enlightening experience for Canada and for Hon. Members.