

[English]

One issue, as the Prime Minister indicated, concerns compensation for provinces that do not take part in certain programs. If I heard the Prime Minister of Canada correctly, he said he believed that this was a matter which could be resolved outside the context of the Constitution. If the question can be resolved on its merits, and if including in the constitutional accord a formula for resolving it, may make the package more acceptable to the province of Quebec, surely we should seek to resolve within the Constitution an agreement which the Prime Minister said can be resolved outside the Constitution.

Again if I heard the Prime Minister correctly, he believes that further discussion may lead to some agreement on the question of language rights. He reiterated that today when, in speaking about the acceptance by the province of Quebec, he said that there had not been acceptance by that province *pas encore*, not yet, indicating that he thinks there may well be some acceptance. If that is so, the new resolution proposed to be presented to Parliament should be refined to seek the unanimity which would be preferred by all of us who want to keep the country intact.

An hon. Member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Clark: There is some heckling across the way which I regret on this occasion, particularly since it comes from the minister of fisheries; but perhaps that is to be expected.

There will be more to add in the House when we have seen the exact language of the new resolution the government will want to introduce. The Prime Minister has asked the opportunity to consult with me and to consult with the hon. Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Broadbent). Naturally we would be prepared to meet with him to discuss the general question of timing. We would be prepared to do that at his earliest convenience.

What is important is that the events today have indicated that much more agreement is possible in Canada than many Canadians had previously believed to be possible. As the Prime Minister reminded us often, and again today, this process began some 54 years ago. The first ministers have just emerged from four days of intensive discussions and some real agreement. Soon the matter will be back in the House of Commons and naturally we will want to consider all the implications of a resolution which is dramatically different from that which we considered before. It may be that, just as Parliament improved the last resolution, Parliament may find solutions to some of the matters not resolved by the first ministers. Certainly all Canadians who value the unity of our country would want us to accept our full duty to find even broader agreement than was reported today.

We have found that honouring the federal-provincial process has resulted in significant progress on the Constitution. This Parliament, whose vigilance and determination allowed the Supreme Court of Canada to decide and allowed the first ministers to meet again, welcomes the progress which has been made so far, and this Parliament looks forward to contributing to even further progress and even further agreement.

The Constitution

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, at the outset I should like to offer my deepest congratulations not only to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) but to the Premiers of the provinces, reflecting highly divergent personal views, highly divergent regional interests and highly divergent partisan concerns, for producing for us today in a desirable process a broad Canadian consensus.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: I should like to say also at this point that when this process began in the House, as the Prime Minister reminded us a few minutes ago, just over a year ago we in the New Democratic Party had three objectives. We wanted an independent Canadian Constitution, we wanted a workable amending formula, and we wanted a charter of rights for all Canadians. We were determined from the outset, reflecting upon the deep traditions of our own party and movement, as well as the traditions of other parties, to ensure that at the end of the process which began a year ago we would end up with a document that achieved those three objectives.

● (1530)

In the process, Madam Speaker, we well know that there were some important Supreme Court decisions, first at the provincial Supreme Court level. Finally the Supreme Court of Canada made a ruling that caused all of us, I might say in passing to the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark), to say at the time that the decisions of the superior court in Canada could not be ignored because they are an integral part of our political system. They had to be respected. Members of all parties, going right back to the decision made by the Supreme Court of the province of Newfoundland and ending in the decision made by the Supreme Court of Canada, said that the judicial process, as part of our political system, had to be respected. That has been done.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: Most specifically, in light of the recent decision that said, on the one hand, to those of us in federal politics that what we were doing was legal—on a certain resolution that we had before us—and, on the other hand, that a broader consensus had to be achieved, there was one course of action that was singularly appropriate, and that was to have a new conference. My party called for that conference right after the Supreme Court decision.

I am pleased to say—and I do not think one should be grudging about this because it seems to me a spirit of generosity and magnanimity flowed through all parties in the building not far from here today, and therefore it behooves us to demonstrate the same concern—that all parties in the House responded to the implications of that Supreme Court decision which came down a few weeks ago.

What we have seen today is a reflection of the best Canadian tradition of compromise. Conservatives, Liberals and New