

As I understand it, the Prime Minister sought agreement on a statement of principles as well as on process, and the goal of agreement on a statement of principles was not reached. It may not even have been pressed by the Prime Minister after he noted the reaction of other first ministers. Consequently—and I think it important that the House and the country understand this fact—the document relating to principles which the Prime Minister has tabled represents only a proposal by the federal government and not an agreement by the meeting.

The Prime Minister made reference to my speech of Friday. He learned long ago the value to him of reading my speeches and adopting my policy, and I recommend that speech to him as well.

I must say that I am a little surprised by the Prime Minister's assertion in his statement that "all of the first ministers committed themselves to a September deadline for major decisions". My understanding from the public comments of the premiers is that many of them see the September meeting as an opportunity to conclude whatever agreement has been reached by ministers and officials in the intervening months, but that they do not regard September as a deadline for decision on all items in the list. Indeed, Premier Blakeney is reported as saying: "We agreed unanimously there should be no deadline for reform"; and if that is so it was a wise decision by the first ministers, because agreement on complex and fundamental questions is work that is too important to be jeopardized by artificial deadlines.

Premier Blakeney went on to say: "We also agreed unanimously if we meet in September and accomplish nothing, it won't look very good"; and certainly the House would hope that discussions this summer will result in an agreement on several specific matters. The question of the nature of the agreement yesterday and the nature of the goals for September affects the expectations that will surround the September meeting, and I hope the Prime Minister will indicate later whether, in his view, the other first ministers are committed to agreement, in principle, in September, on any, on all or on most of the 12 items in the list.

[Translation]

I also noted the following words of the Prime Minister:

- the federal government would have to give serious consideration to its options and recommend to Parliament a plan of action—
- if there is no agreement on the short list of items.

Mention was made of the use of a federal referendum to try to force acceptance of some changes the federal government wants, and we would like to know if that is what the Prime Minister really means or what other unilateral initiatives he is contemplating.

I should like to add that if the federal government expects a co-operative attitude from the provinces with regard to constitutional reform, it must be co-operative itself about other matters that are of importance to some provinces. The Prime Minister knows that I worry over the recent statements some of his ministers made and that I fear they will ruin the

atmosphere of good will that will be necessary for constitutional reform.

[English]

In closing, I want to express my satisfaction and that of my party that the first ministers have agreed on a busy agenda for the summer, and to express also the hope that the discussion will be pursued in a genuine atmosphere of co-operation and lead to significant agreement by September.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa):** Madam Speaker, I, too, would like to join with the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) in congratulating the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) for reporting so quickly to Parliament on the results of yesterday's conference.

Clearly, Madam Speaker, yesterday produced solid evidence for the first time in a long while for believing that Canadians can expect early and substantial constitutional change. For this reason, all participants in the meeting yesterday deserve the unqualified commendation of members of the House.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

[Translation]

**Mr. Broadbent:** The participants showed their good will yesterday. The same attitude must continue to prevail this summer. And of course, Madam Speaker, some decisions will finally have to be taken at the September conference. I agree with the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) in that regard. Quebeckers and Canadians of other areas have been waiting long enough for a new Canadian constitution that would allow Quebeckers to prosper within Canada and would recognize as well the legitimate regional grievances. I repeat that it is imperative that decisions be taken in September.

[English]

It is worth noting in the context of the decision-making process that my party has previously made known its constitutional position on the importance of including fundamental rights and language rights in a new constitution; on the need to leave with the federal government certain financial powers that will enable it to provide at long last an industrial strategy for this country from coast to coast; and on the need to improve our representative system in Ottawa so that those who live in both the west and in the east in particular will feel that they have a higher degree of effective and numerical representation here in the nation's capital.

For a number of months, Madam Speaker, a special 35-member committee of my party has been at work preparing detailed recommendations on the constitution and other matters, including all of the specifics in the short list that the Prime Minister tabled today. I am pleased to say, Madam Speaker, that on these matters we have made decisions for a series of meetings that will take place over the summer as well, and we as a party will be ready for the September first ministers' conference with very specific suggestions for consideration at that time.