

The Constitution

amendment acceptable to the others and acceptable to us could be introduced, I am sure we would be able to find a compromise solution, as we did for Newfoundland. Finally, the only other point on which there was disagreement was the obligation for each province to undertake freely to protect its official language minorities.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: I think the applause is an indication how strongly we feel we have won a major victory in the long struggle of francophone minorities to obtain education rights for their children. This was achieved in all nine anglophone provinces by their agreement this morning. Quebec did not give its agreement, I might say it has not yet given its agreement. I explained that if it was a matter of changing the wording, we would also be willing to do that, provided the intent, which surely reflects the intent of all Canadians who believe in justice, is preserved, that is, to ensure that francophone and anglophone minorities are treated fairly. I am convinced that between people of goodwill acting in good faith, a way can still be found to express this. If we do not succeed today or tomorrow, I am convinced we could and should find a solution within a matter of weeks or months, so that the Quebec government will be able freely to undertake what all free men and women of goodwill would certainly expect it to do, that is, the constitutional protection of its minorities. I have said before that historically speaking, Quebec certainly does not need to be told what to do in that respect. We have always treated our language minorities fairly with regard to education—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau:—and like Mr. Lévesque this morning, I now wish to ask the legislators of the province of Quebec, the members sitting in the National Assembly, to consider the importance of the agreement that was signed today. Under this agreement, in terms of official languages at the federal level and in New Brunswick, and in terms of official languages in education in all provinces, francophone minorities have seen history being made. I only hope that our fellow citizens in Quebec will see this historical gesture repeated, as far as Quebec's jurisdiction is concerned.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[*English*]

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, my colleagues and I are naturally happy to have this matter back in the House of Commons and in Parliament. If I may, at the beginning I want to express our appreciation to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau)—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark:—for reporting so quickly to the House of Commons. May I say that I hope it will be a practice which

will be followed regularly by all ministers on important matters. But I certainly appreciate the Prime Minister coming directly from the conference to the House which has been so occupied with this matter for such a long time.

● (1520)

It was evident from watching the televised responses of first ministers at the conference that many participants in the conference just concluded feel a very real sense of satisfaction and accomplishment at the prospect of a constitutional resolution which is likely to be dramatically different from the constitutional resolution proposed to the House of Commons more than a year ago by the Prime Minister.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: Certainly there is a real sense of satisfaction among many of us in the House and, if I may say so, particularly among many of us in this party. The first ministers met today because the judgment of the Supreme Court of Canada allowed them to meet. The Supreme Court of Canada had the opportunity to judge this question because this party won that right for the court during a long and difficult fight on the floor of the House of Commons.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: On behalf of the people of Canada we fought for the principle that our Constitution should be decided in our country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

Mr. Clark: For nearly a year, the Progressive Conservative Party has fought in Parliament against a resolution which it felt was dividing the country, thereby making it possible for the Supreme Court to consider the resolution and bring in its decision.

[*English*]

I have spoken of satisfaction, but the dark shadow across any satisfaction we might feel today is the fact that the province of Quebec was not able to support the agreement at the conference. The prospect exists, therefore, that Quebec will be isolated and alone on a constitutional question. The consequences of that isolation must concern every Canadian who wants our nation to remain united.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

Mr. Clark: We have just received a copy of the press release. We have not yet examined the text of the new resolution to be submitted to Parliament. During this conference, however, we have heard the Prime Minister of Canada and the Premier of Quebec discuss some of the issues which have resulted in Quebec's isolation.