

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, October 15, 1964

[Text]

The house met at 2.30 p.m.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSED ADDRESS TO HER MAJESTY

Hon. Paul Martin (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, with the consent of the house may I state that after consultation with the Prime Minister and the leaders of all the other parties it has been agreed that the motion expressing loyalty and gratitude to Her Majesty the Queen will be proposed when we meet tomorrow morning at eleven o'clock.

LIBRARY OF PARLIAMENT

REPORT OF JOINT COMMITTEE ON CERTAIN PAY REVISIONS

Mr. Speaker: I have the honour to lay before the house a report from the committee of both houses on the library of parliament with respect to certain revisions of the rates of pay of employees of the library of parliament.

CANADIAN CONSTITUTION

ANNOUNCEMENT OF AGREEMENT ON METHOD OF AMENDMENT

[Translation]

Hon. Guy Favreau (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to inform the house of an agreement which will be a landmark in the constitutional evolution of Canada. After years of stalemate, the federal and provincial governments agreed yesterday afternoon, on a definite text conferring on Canadians themselves the unlimited and exclusive power to amend the British North America Act.

As the representative of the federal government in the discussions which preceded the final agreement, I want to pay tribute to my provincial colleagues—attorneys general and other ministers—for their broadmindedness and their patriotism. These statesmen's arduous labour helped the government to define a formula ensuring the dignity of Canada and the freedom of each of its governments.

The text of the amending formula announced yesterday by the Prime Minister and premiers is the fruit of arduous and statesmanlike labour by all Canadian governments, both federal and provincial. It was imposed on no one, but forged from the free consent of men who recognize themselves as Canadians first. As chairman of the preparatory conference of attorneys general I was proud that my colleagues adopted unanimously the following resolution, moved by Nova Scotia and seconded by Manitoba:

That the report made by the chairman at the end of the conference this morning, together with the consolidated formula submitted by the federal delegation bearing date October 8, 1964, as amended in accordance with the report of the drafting committee dated October 13, 1964, and adopted this morning, be submitted to the conference of Prime Minister and premiers as the report of this conference of attorneys general.

By accepting our draft with like unanimity the Prime Minister and premiers swept away the anachronism that has for too long clouded our status as a fully independent country. Once again they proved that our federation rests upon a deep and abiding unity.

I am pleased to assure hon. members that the government of Canada intends to place the new amending formula on the order paper at the earliest convenient moment. After the Canadian parliament has adopted the formula in a joint address, and after each province has formally approved it as well, the parliament at Westminster will be asked to enact the formula as part of the constitution of Canada. I am sure that Canadian as well as British parliamentarians will be relieved to consider that this will be the last time such action will be required. As of that moment, Canada's constitution will indeed be wholly and truly Canadian.

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, first may I say that Canadians as a whole will be glad to learn that their constitution will hereafter be in the custody and control of Canadians rather than being subject to what was described by the minister as the anachronism that has existed since confederation. We in this party endeavoured to bring about agreement. A