

*Constitution Amendment, 1987*

that spirit, we have adopted programs and policies which support integration, retention of cultures and languages, race relations and community relations. In that spirit, we established in 1985 a Standing Committee of the House on Multiculturalism. In that spirit, we will be bringing forward the Multicultural Act this fall, Canada's first.

It is also in that spirit that the Accord brought in through Section 16 a protection for multicultural rights contained in the Constitution. Section 16 says that Section 27 of the Constitution dealing with multicultural rights will have equal legal status as the courts interpret the Constitution. In short, Section 16 shelters Section 27.

The committee recommended that there be a standing joint committee that would allow those groups who want further constitutional change beyond that which the 1982 amendment gave them to seek it in the second round. That should be a good opportunity for those groups to come forward.

I have tried to point out to the House that the role of Quebec through this process has been put in train for the next decade and the next century. It is an historic achievement. Second, its impact has been to strengthen Canada. Third, it supports all of those other members of the constitutional family who so much depend on this country's continued recognition of the importance of diversity and tolerance.

*[Translation]*

When we say that we support the joint committee's report, we say yes to Quebec. When we say yes to Quebec, we say yes to Canada.

**Mr. Berger:** Madam Speaker, the Secretary of State (Mr. Crombie) is to be commended for his speech, although I do not entirely agree with everything he said. Since I was not in the House throughout his speech, I wonder whether he referred to the concerns of groups such as the *Fédération des Francophones hors Québec*, the *Société franco-manitobaine* or Canadian Parents for French, who, I found, were very eloquent in expressing their concern that, in the Meech Lake Accord or as a result of that Accord, the Governments do not undertake to promote the cause of language minorities. The Accord merely maintains or protects minorities, which, according to the groups I mentioned, merely means maintaining the *status quo*, something they find unacceptable. The *Fédération des Francophones hors Québec* said that the wording of the Meech Lake Accord was entirely inadequate to put a stop to the ravages of assimilation. That is what they said when they appeared before the Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons.

I therefore wonder how the Secretary of State, who, if I am not mistaken, has a responsibility for language minorities, responds to the concerns of these groups.

**Mr. Crombie:** Madam Speaker, I did meet many groups from outside Quebec and especially the *Fédération des Francophones hors Québec*.

• (1300)

*[English]*

When they raised questions with me regarding their concern about Meech Lake I said, as indeed I have said on other occasions, that it seems to me the important thing to understand about the Accord is the first part. It speaks for the first time about the importance of the relationship of dual languages and a distinct Quebec within the whole of Canada. It makes clear—

*[Translation]*

the role of Quebec and the role of both official languages and that it is an important one which lies at the very heart of Canada. And the Accord reflects that reality.

*[English]*

**Mr. Berger:** I would like to refer the Minister to the speech made by the Quebec Minister for Intergovernmental Affairs on May 9, 1986. He said that one of the three principal objectives of the Government of Quebec was to improve the situation of French-speaking Canadians outside Quebec. He referred to the need to change Section 23 of the Charter to provide for management, if you will, of their schools by French-speaking Canadians. He also referred to removing perhaps the criteria of "where numbers warrant" prior to availing oneself of the right to minority language education under Section 23 of the Charter.

Quebec says that this was their objective. Presumably it was an objective of the federal Government. Therefore, why did the federal Government not insist that these changes be made to the Charter in order to improve the situation of French-speaking minorities outside Quebec?

**Mr. Crombie:** Madam Speaker, I do not think it makes much sense to go behind the agreement. It was made by Quebec, the Government of Canada, and all the other provinces. It may well be in the give and take of negotiations that there were some things a particular province may not have been looking for, or they were unable to obtain something that they were looking for. That could apply to the federal Government as well. All that has to do with the essential way in which we go about Constitution-making. It does not involve some kind of ideological purity. It is not some kind of academic event flowing only from legal classrooms. It has to do with the blood and guts of the country. It has to do with compromise. That is why I spoke about the historic role of Quebec. It has always been part of the give and take over the nature of this country.

The Hon. Member asks why something did not happen. In my judgment it is part of the realism and magic of federalism. It is a product of compromise, not some kind of ideological event.

The second point I would make with respect to the question of French outside Quebec is that this Government, and I might add this Minister along with two others, brought to this House