secure an agreement between the provinces. That proved to be impossible.

● (2040)

Mr. Dick: He was rigid.

Mr. Blais: Rigidity is the last word I would use to describe that exercise. When we reached that impasse there needed to be a slicing of the Gordian knot. I do not know of any other example or parallel befitting the impasse we reached than the Gordian knot.

The hon. member for Grenville-Carleton agreed that we had public support. He ought to agree and take heed of it because there is a recognition throughout the country that we are doing what needs to be done and what needs to be done now.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Dick: You are losing your support.

Mr. Blais: Hon. gentlemen opposite should listen to their constituents. I have been in some of their ridings and I have received the positive response they do not expect but will wake up to. I have been in Parry Sound, Orillia, Nipissing, Toronto and New Brunswick. People said that we were doing the right thing and gave us the "go-ahead" to do it.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Blais: I have hit a sensitive nerve on the other side. I note the hon. gentlemen who are sensitive are those most open to the representations of their constituents.

The hon. member for Grenville-Carleton indicated a concern regarding certain areas of the charter of human rights. I listened this afternoon to the question of the hon. member for Rosedale (Mr. Crombie) who raised the Bakke case and the question of affirmative action. I simply call section 15 to the attention of the House, the non-discrimination section of the resolution. It contains specific provisions so that the non-discrimination rights do not in any way infringe upon positive action programs as reflected through policy or through legislation. That is the type of foresight we used in the preparation of this resolution.

Also, I was somewhat concerned about an article written by Mr. Gwyn in which he quoted the counsel for the Canadian Civil Liberties Association who expressed some reservation about the entrenchment of a bill of rights. I simply point out that the counsel is a hired hand of that particular association, whereas the chairman, Mr. Tarnapolsky, is a strong supporter of the legislation with which we are dealing, including the entrenchment of the bill of rights. I suggest that is the position to adopt. I have never been able to accept the argument that somehow we should be running after 11 legislatures in this country to protect human and civil rights of individuals, in effect something which should be up front. One will notice in the resolution before us that the first section deals with human rights and that subsequent sections deal with rights of individuals. That is the importance which ought to be given them.

I am a lawyer trained in the common law as is the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton. He expressed reservations about codifying, that is, entrenching. I do not have any of those reservations. While I have a great deal of respect for skilful lawyers who are original and like to hunt in libraries in order to unearth principles of common law which may protect their clients, I do not think the man on the street, the Canadian citizen, is interested in hiring lawyers in order to ascertain his human rights. He wants them up front.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Blais: No greater man recognized that necessity than John Diefenbaker when he saw the common law as imperfect and understood the necessity of codifying those principles and rights up front in the bill of rights he introduced in the legislation. Unfortunately that was interpreted by the Supreme Court of Canada in the guise of an interpretation statute; it was never given its intended weight. The entrenchment of a bill of rights, mobility rights and non-discrimination rights will secure for Canadians a recognition of rights recognized throughout civilization. It is time to entrench those rights.

[*Translation*]

But there is in fact another reason why I wanted to take part in this debate. It is true that I have been sitting in this House for eight years as a member of Parliament, but I have been a French Canadian and a Franco-Ontarian for 40 years, since I was born. And this really means something. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to study constitutional law when I was in primary school, in the sixth, seventh and eighth grades, because our teachers recognized that it was essential for us to know our rights if we wanted to preserve our identity as French Canadians even though we lived outside Quebec.

I can say, Mr. Speaker, that the issue of the minority language and education rights existed before confederation, as hon. members know quite well. In fact, the last issue to be settled when the confederative agreement of 1867 was passed was the protection of minority rights as concerns education. This appears under British North America Act section 93.

When I was a small boy, I lived in a city called Sturgeon Falls in northern Ontario. My great grandparents settled in northern Ontario with the building of the railway in the 1880s. They had left the province of Quebec because they considered that all of Canada was their country. They and many of their fellow citizens settled in northern Ontario.

In my native city, there were schools right from the start, but unfortunately, then came what was called regulation 17. I do not want to go over this sad moment in our history, but our basic rights were infringed upon by a statutory regulation of the province of Ontario. It was after this that French Canadian national movements such as the ACFO, the movement of