

Government Orders

the very complex situations of first nations across this country.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Ms. McLaughlin: What I am saying here today is that the constitutional debate that takes place should be both more immediately relevant and broader in scope than that envisioned by this proposed joint committee.

[*Translation*]

My party, as you know, has made numerous concrete proposals in this regard. We proposed the establishment of a constituent assembly. We asked that a Standing Committee on the Constitution be set up by the House of Commons, and renew that request today. If we have standing committees on transport and on agriculture, we can also have a committee on the Constitution, i.e. on the country's future. Such a form would allow broader discussion of the constitution, in particular of an amending formula. In short, a standing committee would allow us to examine the Constitution as a whole, instead of doing so in piecemeal fashion, as the motion put forward today by the government seems to be intended to do.

[*English*]

In conclusion, what I am saying and my party is saying is that it is not enough to strike a committee and travel around the country to discuss the amending formula, no matter how important that amending formula is, because Canada is not just about an amending formula; it is about people living together. We have to get to the heart of the matter; we have to talk about Canada itself.

When we talk about Canada, let us talk about national institutions, something this government seems determined to destroy. Let us talk about universal social programs, something else this government is obviously determined to let go. Let us talk about an economy that serves Canadian families throughout this country. Let us talk about a vision for Canada. Rather than look to an individual or an elite for that vision, let us look to the Canadian people: aboriginal people and women, people from the regions across the country, from Quebec; farmers, environmentalists, and minority groups. The vision is there. It is a vision of diversity within this country, and of acknowledging diversity within one nation.

Leadership is about bringing those visions together, and that is what we in this party intend to do.

We must work together to renew Canada, to give to our nation a new sense of direction and a new sense of purpose. We have a nation like no other and an opportunity that few on this planet have to build a society of people living together, sharing with each other, caring for each other, and celebrating the richness of our common humanity.

• (1230)

The responsibility we are charged with as members of Parliament is to bring Canadians together, to find solutions to our conflicts and to build for the future.

I want to propose, today, an amendment to the government motion, recognizing that the Speaker will need to make a ruling on this. I propose this amendment because I feel that through this we could fulfil our responsibilities to the Canadian people, to really address all of the issues.

Therefore I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "that" and substituting the following therefor:

"a standing committee of the House of Commons be appointed to consult broadly with Canadians and inquire into and report upon all matters related to the Constitution, including the amending formula".

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The Chair has received the motion in amendment moved by the hon. member for Yukon and will take it under advisement.

Ten minutes for questions and comments. The hon. member for Shefford.

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, after listening to the last three speeches, I had the distinct impression there was a lot being recycled here. About ten years ago I heard a speech in which the Prime Minister at the time used exactly the same terms. Three years ago, when I heard the Prime Minister of Canada talk about Meech Lake, it was the same speech, the same terms, the same old song. And when I hear hon. members repeat those same platitudes, I have to say we are very, very skeptical.

We are convinced this committee is doomed to failure. Mr. Speaker, when your house is on fire, it's too late to worry about the plumbing! To think they can reestablish a consensus in this country through an amending formula, Mr. Speaker, is utopian. It's a diversion, and it's a waste of time. They would have Canadians believe that