

Canadians who cannot afford to travel up to 3,000 miles to appear before this committee will have the opportunity to exchange their ideas with their elected representatives.

**Mr. Mazankowski:** Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member is a learned constitutional expert. He knows very well that this requires the deliberation of this House. The constitutional amending process has to be dealt with by this House. The constitutional amending process has to be dealt with in each and every one of the legislatures. Is he suggesting that we as a federal Parliament should be interfering with and interposing our will upon the people of the provinces who now, through their Premiers and Governments, may very well express a desire to hold public hearings or not? Why does the Hon. Member want to be so interfering? It is part of his centralist attitude, his centralist heritage. He continues to live in the dream world that father knows best in central Canada. Again, this is a clear example of the difference and division of Canada. He sees it through the telescope of that central vision. We see a more diversified and more decentralized Canada.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Johnston:** Madam Speaker, the only conclusion I can draw from the Deputy Prime Minister's remarks is that he does not think Canadians necessarily have a right to be heard. It has nothing to do with a centralized country. This is a big country. People would like the opportunity to make their views known to their elected representatives. If they are denied that right at the provincial level, it seems to me that this committee of Parliament would be perfectly justified in having a subcommittee travel to the regions to hear those views expressed.

**Mr. Mazankowski:** Madam Speaker, that is absolute nonsense. If the Hon. Member behaves he may very well be selected as a member of the committee and he can make that pitch before the committee. But, by the way he has been acting, I doubt very much that his Leader will put him on the committee.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne):** Resuming debate with the Hon. Member for Windsor West (Mr. Gray).

**Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West):** Madam Speaker, I am rising on behalf of my Party to support this motion. As the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Turner) has made clear, we are in support of the basic purpose of the constitutional Accord which is to have Quebec formally sign and accept the Constitution. Therefore we intend to vote in favour of the Accord. However, we believe that it can be improved upon. It is our intention to propose a number of amendments next fall, or whenever, after the proposed joint committee completes its work, the required resolution to amend the Constitution comes before this House for consideration and debate.

It is in keeping with our view that improvement is needed and possible, that we concur in the proposal to send the Accord for study and for a report to this House to a special joint committee. The procedure that was followed in 1980 and 1981

### *Constitutional Accord*

which resulted in the patriation of the Constitution, along with the establishment of a Charter of Rights, was initiated by the establishment of a special joint committee of the House and the Senate. That committee held televised hearings in Ottawa over a number of months. It heard scores of witnesses and it proposed a number of important improvements to the constitutional proposals at that time.

No one can deny that the special joint committee was a positive exercise in participatory democracy. It is my hope and expectation that having learned from that experience the presently proposed special joint committee will be permitted to proceed and its work will be looked upon with an open mind by the Government and by all sides of the House with similarly beneficial results. We expect that this committee will hear as broad a range of witnesses as its predecessor heard in 1980 and 1981.

We also support this motion in the expectation that if, as in 1980 and 1981, the committee should find that the time-frame set down in the terms of reference is too restrictive the Government will, as was done last time, look favourably upon a request for an extension of its life. I am referring in this case, of course, to the life of the special joint committee, not that of the Government.

It may be that this will not be required. But on an issue as important as the structure of our federal system there is no need—in fact it would be wrong—for the matter to be dealt with in undue haste. There is a definite need for due deliberation. After all, we are dealing with the basic law, the fundamental law of the country, the law on which all other law is based.

The Accord raises a number of issues that the committee will have to address and on which it will have to hear witnesses. We have already raised some of these in the House and we will raise others over the coming weeks.

As we have said, there are implications with respect to the Accord for the rights of our aboriginal peoples. The aboriginal peoples need assurances that this Accord will not mean any backward movement in the progress they expect in terms of their own hopes and aspirations. It should be possible to move these hopes and aspirations forward through the Constitution as it may turn out to be amended by the Accord.

• (1040)

The committee must carefully examine the implications of the Accord for minorities in our country. We believe that the aspirations of Canadians are, for a bilingual and a multicultural society, that while recognizing regional or provincial distinctiveness, especially the distinctive character of Quebec, it should also provide nation-wide guarantees of rights for all regardless of ethnic or national origin.

Similarly, Madam Speaker, we must examine the Accord in the light of the aspirations for eventual provincial status by our northern territories. The people of these territories will want assurances that the Accord does not spell an end to their