

acteristic of Canada referred to in paragraph (1)(a) is affirmed.

Whereas paragraph (3) says:

(3) The role of the legislature and Government of Quebec to preserve and promote the distinct identity of Quebec referred to in paragraph (1)(b) is affirmed.

Of course, paragraph (1)(b) alludes to the fact that the majority of French Canadians are concentrated in Quebec.

Here is my question: Why is it that the Government of Canada did not receive from the provinces the right to promote the French language within the federal jurisdiction and did not have that right included in the constitutional amendment?

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government and Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations): Honourable senators, we intend to present the constitutional resolutions in this house and in the other place within a few days.

Then, you will have every opportunity, during debates and in committee, to talk about these issues, but not today.

Senator Corbin: Honourable senators, I think that up to now I have shown exemplary patience, if I dare say so myself, regarding the interpretation of these documents.

It seems to me, upon reading the document we now have and on which reviewing committees will work at a later date, it is quite obvious that the federal government does not intend to treat its French-speaking minority with the same generosity that Quebec will treat its French-speaking majority.

I could wait for a committee to study the matter, or wait for others to ask questions and provide answers, but I am not inclined to do so. I feel I waited long enough and that French-speaking Canadians outside Quebec have shown much patience. It seems to me that French-speaking Canadians outside Quebec should have answers right now, to be able to rejoice to the same degree as Quebecers.

However, up to that point, I do not think they can.

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, what is quite obvious, to borrow my colleague's expression, is the fact that for the first time, in one of its interpretative clauses, our Constitution gives explicit recognition to the linguistic duality of our country and to the fact that Quebec constitutes a distinct society within Canada. Until now, that recognition had not been included in our Constitution and least of all in the Constitution Act, 1982.

I repeat that my colleague will have an opportunity, in committee and during the debate on the resolutions in this chamber, to consider and discuss these issues. I do not think Oral Question Period is the right time or place to try to interpret all the clauses of this resolution.

1987 CONSTITUTIONAL ACCORD—TABLING OF RESOLUTIONS

Hon. Jean Bazin: Honourable senators, I have a question for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. As a senator from Quebec, I, of course, want to stress the importance of the

unanimous constitutional agreement reached today by all political leaders in this country.

My question concerns a mere technicality. According to the text of the Accord, the resolutions are to be tabled in the Senate and the House of Commons as soon as possible.

Have any commitments been made at the provincial level regarding the time factor or does the text speak for itself, and are we to understand that for each province there is a commitment to table the resolutions as soon as possible?

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government and Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations): Honourable senators, the commitment is the same for both the federal government and the provincial governments. They are all committed to tabling the text in their respective legislatures as soon as possible.

There are of course a number of provinces, including Nova Scotia, where the Legislative Assembly has already adjourned for the summer recess.

As far as Quebec is concerned, I have the impression they are going to proceed very shortly, since the Meech Lake accord has already been the subject of a very lively debate in one of the parliamentary committees.

As far as the federal government is concerned, we intend to proceed very shortly.

1987 CONSTITUTIONAL ACCORD—POSSIBILITY OF AMENDMENT

Hon. Azellus Denis: Honourable senators, I have a question for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. If I understand correctly, that accord is to be approved as is by the Legislative Assemblies and Parliament. So there is no question of either those Assemblies or Parliament bringing in amendments. My question is this: Is it possible that a self-evident amendment and that would be made available to all provinces at the same time as Parliament, either by letter or otherwise, could be accepted by the First Ministers of Canada?

If I understand correctly, there is no question of changing even one word in that accord. There may be a committee, a hearing. But whatever the result of those hearings, it must be accepted without amendment anyway. That is the question I am putting to the Leader of the Government.

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government and Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations): Honourable senators, let me say quite simply that nothing prevents my friend or any other senator or M.P. from proposing amendments to the constitutional proposal. In all good faith, we would have as a government to consider them. This being said, I must add that the Canadian and provincial governments are committed to abiding by those texts. The First Ministers made a very clear commitment to abide by the texts that were approved and ratified today. Let me repeat that nothing prevents a senator or M.P. from putting an amendment forward. In all good faith, we would have to consider it.

Senator Denis: If I understand correctly, all sorts of amendments may be put forward at the Canadian government level,