

*Supply*

although I was not an official member of the committee, I sat in on many of the hearings—of their dissatisfaction with the process that had led to the Meech accord as it stood.

I can recall very well that the chairman, the hon. member for Sherbrooke, was very sympathetic and understanding in listening to those people. As a matter of fact, the report that he helped to produce I felt was a good report. We all supported the report. We felt it was one that could have broken the logjam if it were not so late in the day.

My point is this: this motion and many of the paragraphs—paragraphs 1, 2 and 3—are meant to avoid the pitfalls that existed in the production of Meech. I thought that the hon. member who sat through those long hearings in the spring of last year recognized that. He listened to the intensity and the emotion with which those groups presented their positions. He knows that they had not been listened to and the changes that he himself had suggested to the committee had not been implemented. We know what happened in Manitoba, with an aboriginal member of the Manitoba legislature expressing the dissatisfaction of aboriginal peoples with the final result. We had both ethnic and language minorities in different parts of the country expressing their dissatisfaction.

I ask him again: What is so wrong with the attempt made in this motion to broaden the discussion, to bring in opposition members of Parliament, and to bring in special interest groups representing the aboriginal peoples, minorities, women and multicultural groups? Would that not enhance the process and help to avoid what happened during the Meech process? Would the transparency which is suggested here not avoid the harsh criticism that took place after the last futile attempt to get through the report when we had those long meetings in the Conference Centre?

We are both Quebecers and we both believe strongly in Quebec and Canada. I want to see this new process work. I want to see us rally people behind this great country. The hon. member did a good job as chairman. I thought he understood that more people had to be involved and that is why he supported the report he did.

**Mr. Charest:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his remarks and say to him that essentially I do agree

with him on the fact that as we undertake further constitutional change in this country we are certainly going to have to devise methods by which we automatically take into account a wide public consultation process. At this point in time with the Beaudoin-Edwards Committee working now, my understanding is that part of its mandate is to deal with that. I am not ready to commit to any specific type. I would rather have the benefit of its wisdom and its work before we reach that point.

Certainly I recognize that Canadians today, more than ever before, want to be part of the process. Let me share one of the reasons why I think that is the case, from our own informal gathering of facts and what we witnessed as we travelled across the country.

From our experience on the committee, it was our sense that ever since the Constitution had been patriated in 1981-82, and ever since Canadians had given themselves a charter of rights, we sensed that there was out there in the country a stronger sense of ownership than ever before toward this Canadian Constitution. Because there was this stronger sense of ownership on the part of Canadians, there was also a willingness on their part and a sense of belonging to this Constitution that compelled them to want to be part of the process. That is what a lot of members—some of whom are in this House today—shared as a vision of what was happening across the country.

What I am saying is that in the very specific context of what we are witnessing today, it is important to let all those provinces, those different political parties and the government undertake the work they have undertaken to bring us to the same place and point in time when we will embark upon a process that I am convinced will devise new methods by which the public will participate.

• (1550)

It would be premature, today, to come forward with this statement when in fact a lot of it I take for granted anyway. I take it for granted in the sense that it will happen. I am not saying that it will happen. I am among those parliamentarians in legislatures who will watch the process very closely and ensure that it happens.

It is important at this time and place to let those committees come forward and then deal with those issues. As we come to those bridges we will cross them.