

of the first ministers of all the provinces and the federal government, and this is the way we will continue to conduct these negotiations. There may be occasions when it is useful to have bilateral discussions between two provinces or between the federal government and a province, but these discussions must be agreeable to all the parties concerned.

[Translation]

Mr. Fortin: I have a supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

In the light of the news that the Quebec government is reportedly prepared to join in such bilateral agreements, in order to find common grounds for agreement, has the federal government been formally informed of such a request? If so, has it agreed to it?

[English]

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, the only news we have from the province of Quebec is the statement made by the Prime Minister of Quebec from which I quoted a moment ago. The government of Canada would welcome any further views that the government of Quebec would like to put before the Prime Minister of Canada as chairman of the constitutional conference.

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Hastings): Mr. Speaker, my question is supplementary to the first question. The Leader of the Opposition asked the Acting Prime Minister. I jotted down the words of the Prime Minister because they impressed me. He said that the constitution is really of relatively little importance and he went on to say, "and therefore I think it will be perfectly satisfactory to continue on in the way we have been going for many years". Is it not evident to the House and to the country that the Prime Minister is perfectly satisfied to leave our constitution in the hands of the British Parliament, as the Leader of the Opposition suggested in his question?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. That, of course, is argument.

[Translation]

PROPOSED CHARTER—FURTHER CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

Hon. Martial Asselin (Charlevoix): Mr. Speaker, may I ask a supplementary of the Acting Prime Minister.

Since the Prime Minister recently told the provinces that concurrence in the Victoria charter had to be reached within a specified period or else much time would be required to revise the Canadian constitution, has the Canadian government changed its mind since then and is it prepared to invite the provinces in the near future to consider the ambiguities mentioned by the Premier of Quebec in order to be able to save the Canadian confederation?

[English]

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows very well, the decision to give another ten days to the governments that

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have been considering these proposals since February was one that was made collectively and not by the federal government alone. No government at that time asked for more time. The time was considered reasonable for the first ministers who had considered the same questions in February to consult their governments and see whether they were prepared to go along with the charter as it had been drafted. The position at the present time is that if the province of Quebec wants to have further clarification of the terms of the charter which were agreed to by all parties, not just by the federal government, then—

Mr. Stanfield: They were not agreed to.

Mr. Sharp: They were agreed to by the first ministers to show to their respective cabinets.

Mr. Ricard: That is not the same thing.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Sharp: We are, therefore, waiting for the government of Quebec—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

[Translation]

REJECTION OF CHARTER BY ORDER—
PREPARATION OF REPORT BY JOINT
PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE

Hon. Martial Asselin (Charlevoix): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a supplementary question.

I would like to know whether the minister, as a result of Quebec's rejection of the Victoria charter, will ask the joint Parliamentary Committee on Constitution to present a report on constitutional matters to Parliament or whether the government will merely ask that the committee be dissolved.

[English]

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): The activities of the committee are in its own hands, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation]

REQUEST FOR DEBATE ON PROPOSED CHARTER
BEFORE SUMMER RECESS

Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, I also wish to address a supplementary question to the Acting Prime Minister.

Since this constitutional issue is of extreme importance and as it is also of great interest to all members, would the hon. minister be willing to recommend to opposition parties a one-day debate on this matter before the 30th of June?

[English]

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I think that is something that would have to be agreed to by the various parties. But my understanding is that the time of the House is fully taken up with the matters now before it.