

Constitutional Renewal

list and many participants specified that although the list was not all-inclusive, it did indicate the priorities we had for September. Of course, no one felt he would be excluded from bringing in other matters after September.

On the second part of the question concerning the enlargement of the participating group, I put the question directly to the premiers because I had in mind a suggestion which had been made to me last week by the Leader of the New Democratic Party. I asked if the premiers would consider enlarging their delegations as we would enlarge ours by the addition of leaders of opposition parties. Once again, I do not want to speak for all of them or answer for each, but I think it is fair to say that they were quite negative to that proposal, which I believe is the attitude of the present Leader of the Opposition who thinks that it should be the job of the 11 ministers, at least in the early stages, to pursue these meetings and to head the delegations.

As far as I am concerned, the subject matter is still open. I have told the leaders of the other parties in this House that if we were to agree on a plan of action, I would gladly consider making them active participants in any federal delegation which I would lead. To that answer I should add that we also discussed the question of participation by native Canadians, participation by the representatives of the Yukon and Northwest Territories and, indeed, the question of the participation of mayors and municipalities who are asking to be included in such discussions. We had a very lengthy discussion on these subjects too.

Mr. Epp: I would like to ask the Prime Minister another question which arises from his last statement in answer to my first question, and that is the participation of elected members or elected leaders from the territories. If I can repeat my earlier words, as the process evolves those people who are not only deeply interested but who will be affected by constitutional changes will, if success is to be achieved, need to have some participation rather than a decision being given to them. Was there a clear rejection by the Prime Minister and the premiers of participation by elected government leaders of the territories, and obviously there is one territory that has different status, namely the Yukon?

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, I would state it in a more positive way. There was a clear preference expressed by, I would say, if not the totality then certainly the overwhelming majority of the 11 present yesterday, for proceeding the next time only with first ministers. The question was discussed, I repeat, of adding representatives from the territories and from the municipalities. Indeed, several first ministers indicated groups of different kinds in their provinces that would like to participate, such as the Francophonie Quebec.

The conclusion was reached that we should continue in the future as we have in the past and have the 11 governments head delegations. In those delegations we could, of course, include, as we have in the past, representatives of the territories. As some of the first ministers point out, they had in the past included representatives of municipalities, Indian bands

and so on. The procedure willed by the 11 first ministers yesterday was that we continue to have 11 delegations meeting, with each first minister being free to bring into his delegation those people he feels should have a voice or a place in his delegation.

I should add that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chrétien) did meet with representatives of the territories in recent days and indicated that we would want to include them in our delegation as we have in the past. There may be in the future some larger form of constitutional convention, but for the time being the procedure will be 11 delegations led by 11 first ministers.

Mr. Broadbent: Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister knows both from private conversation and from public statements that my colleagues and I favour at some point an outside deadline being established for these important talks. I understand from his comments that he shares the view that it is important, while setting a deadline, to avoid any suggestion of confrontation or belligerency at this point.

In light of the Prime Minister's earlier answers to the Leader of the Opposition, and just for the purpose of clarification, with regard to the short list of items that were agreed to for the September meeting, what is the Prime Minister's view in approximate terms about the number of items that have to be agreed to before the September meeting in order for him to think that that is sufficient progress not to require, for example, parliamentary action?

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, I begin by saying that we agree with the Leader of the New Democratic Party who favours deadlines but no belligerence. I would indicate to him that there was no setting of a deadline by me yesterday. I proposed a calendar. It was discussed, modified and finally accepted. In so far as that calendar contains a notion of a deadline by talking of "finalizing agreements", I want to assure the Leader of the New Democratic Party that it was not as a result of belligerency that I got that particular agreement.

I think the next question is impossible to answer except by saying the maximum number of agreements would be 12 and the optimum would be near the maximum. We will have to be reasonable and see if there is substantial progress or not. I am not sure I follow the logic of the Leader of the New Democratic Party when he says that if we reach a great measure of agreement, or a maximum of agreement, then perhaps parliamentary action would not be needed. I would think on the contrary. Perhaps I misinterpreted his thinking, but if we have reached optimum agreement, hopefully we will be proceeding with parliamentary action very soon after that agreement.

• (1540)

Mr. Broadbent: This is a two-part question to get clarification of the point made by the Prime Minister. As I understand it, both from private conversations and public statements there are two situations in which parliamentary action might take place. One is if there is substantial agreement, and as part of the normal process of amending the constitution and hopefully repatriating it a special act of Parliament would be required.