

the Inuit word for the constitution so that it will appear on our records for the first time.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to deal with three aspects of the resolution now under consideration. First, I note the great number of views expressed by experts, members of Parliament, other people and the public at large on the elements of the constitutional reform generally and more especially on this resolution. I conclude that I and others have to take a relativistic attitude devoid of doctrinairism and absolutism.

In addition, since it is unfortunately impossible to conclude an early constitutional agreement at the federal and provincial levels, it is unavoidable, in my view, that Parliament has to take limited action at the request of government. Moreover, such a unilateral measure is adequately warranted from a philosophical, legal, conventional and political point of view. Finally, Mr. Speaker, the contents of this resolution do not disturb the present balance of powers between the two levels of government in Canada and consequently it is acceptable and can be approved.

I will conclude my remarks by wishing, of course, that the present resolution be adopted after having been polished in committee in the sense Boileau gave to this word and that the effort of constitutional reform be maintained beginning by the search for an amending formula agreed to by the two levels of governments, which is precisely what this resolution calls for.

Mr. Speaker, last weekend I read most of the speeches made in this House since October 6 by my hon. colleagues. All of them were made by learned, passionate and obviously sincere persons. Yet what a wide range of opinions! For some Progressive Conservative members, if adopted this resolution would signal the end of Canadian federalism and that of Canada itself. On the other hand, the same text meets the expectations of many other members and their electors, so they think. Some among the first group, namely, those who oppose the resolution, still approve part of its content thereby often contradicting the arguments they use to reject the other part, the acceptable elements being different from one member to the other. Some would like to add to it, others would rather delete from it according to their own preferences and the degree of public consensus they believe exists. Certainly there is a lesson in that for us to learn. As it should, politics plays a major role in this debate, and I will come back to that later.

Mr. Speaker, I have witnessed in the past the phenomenon of diversified opinions. It was in 1978 and 1979 when, as a member of the Task Force on Canadian Unity, I had the opportunity to hear personally the views of hundreds of Canadians from all walks of life and from all regions of Canada as well as of dozens of experts, all very knowledgeable, including several federal and provincial politicians of yesterday, of today as well as of tomorrow. Most of their contribu-

tions have been gathered in the third report of the task force entitled "A Time to Speak," a document which anybody seeking the absolute in politics should read, but which those who do not wish to change orientation should keep away from.

It was then to be expected, Mr. Speaker, that it might be impossible to accommodate all these various and indeed contradictory positions, and that some day or other, if we were to get out of the strait-jacket, the constitutional garment would have to be pulled somewhat at the seams! After the fascinating if overwhelming experience of the Task Force on Canadian Unity, I went to see other federations at work, the Federal Republic of Germany, Switzerland and Yugoslavia. I even had an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to discuss in Sarajevo the dangers of balkanization! Once more, I was looking at the diversity of federal concepts and their practical implementations. May I add that during ten years of my life, as a student and later a professor, I met the finest brains of federal political thought, and during ten years also as a member of Parliament and minister of the Crown, I strived to translate into actions the spirit of federalism, in practical situations such as that referred to by the hon. member for Sarnia, (Mr. Cullen), namely, regional sharing in the development of the petrochemical industry. What did I learn from all that? First, that there is no doubt a spirit of federalism made up of balance and tolerance, but that the means to express that spirit may vary quite significantly from one country to the other, one period to the other, one government to the other, one member of Parliament to the other and one citizen to the other, without anyone's good will being in doubt.

In other words, I learned there is no single and perfect model of the federal state, one that could be imitated by all. All there is is more or less successful variations on famous themes, namely, the two orders of government, the formal distribution of powers, one adjudicator or a number of them if the referendum is to be accepted, institutions promoting interaction, and so on. The principle is understood by all, but there is no single formula to success. As it was in the beginning, as it is now and as it shall not be for centuries and centuries, such is the phrase that could be applied to our Canadian federalism.

● (1630)

[*English*]

I have learned also that if each one of us individual Canadians, members of Parliament and of legislatures, and heads and members of executives, stand unbending on all our first and favourite choices, nothing will happen. The constitution will not adapt to change, and we might very well die as a country, each of us with his or her constitutional boots on. As Mae West used to say, "Something's got to give".

So, we must compromise, obviously. This has often been said. Such an attitude was probably the best accomplishment of the Task Force on Canadian Unity when eight of us, commissioners, so different in so many ways, agreed on a single set of recommendations. We agreed on something