

Mr. Speaker, I would be interested to hear the comments of the hon. member for St. Boniface, who, I may recall, took a very correct position, and I hope I can say the same for the hon. member for Richelieu if he has a chance to speak in the House today.

**Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (St. Boniface):** I want to thank my hon. colleague for his flattering remarks, and I will attempt to answer his question.

First of all, the conditions. Personally, I do not see them as conditions, but mostly as principles. I cannot understand how the principles I mentioned would of necessity preclude the addition of other principles should we want to do so later on. I really want to emphasize the key point. I do believe that the division of powers is a key issue. I feel this is an issue that has to be considered. And its importance has been recognized, because as was mentioned many times in this House during Question Period, a committee has been established by the Prime Minister and his government to look at and thoroughly discuss this issue.

So, those are not conditions but principles. Nothing prevents us from adding some or bringing on changes should we come to the conclusion after a lengthy debate and discussion that it would be useful. And I think we should not disregard the main question I asked, namely should we not, through the committee set up by the Prime Minister to look at the process for amending the Constitution, thoroughly consider the matter concerning the division of powers? I firmly believe we should.

[*English*]

**Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for St. Boniface for his presentation as well.

I would just like to make a couple of comments and ask the member his viewpoint, I suppose specifically about the issue of Senate reform since his party has been in power for most of the years since confederation. That is probably why we have not seen Senate reform to this point. It has certainly become a hot issue since the Meech Lake debate.

In terms of specifics, where we have seen the amendment and the NDP motion as well for this, that we would all get together and talk about what is going on in the country and perhaps what our constitutional future is going to be.

### *Supply*

I think many people in Canada are just afraid that the politicians are all getting into this fray, I suppose, and they are wondering about what is happening economically with the fiscal situation in the country. We all seem to be paralyzed with our constitutional future.

I would like to ask the member for his opinion on setting up actual constitutional conventions whereby people would be elected to these conventions at the local levels—they would be elected and not appointed by politicians—and each of those people would contribute to drafting a new Canadian Constitution. There would be technical experts there as well so that these people could go through clause-by-clause what interests them in terms of real and actual change for the Canadian Constitution. Once they had come together for two to four months, they would come back and report and ask us what we thought of it. The only way that could ever happen is by a Canadian referendum.

We have heard time and time again that that is not the Canadian way. I would be interested to know how the member would put forward his party's proposal on actual constitutional conventions as well as true Senate reform.

**Mr. Duhamel:** I thank my colleague for a number of questions.

First of all, I want members to know that it was the Liberal Party which said that Senate reform is necessary and would be an asset to areas such as western Canada. We have said it and we continue to say it, and I just want to make sure that we recognize that. I shall continue to work for a reformed Senate, and I shall continue to seek additional powers for western Canada, but in the context of Canada. I want to make sure that power is distributed fairly, and I am not sure that the Senate is a panacea either.

With respect to the fiscal situation, I have to agree with the hon. member. I have a signed document from the Minister of Finance which says that the debt was \$168.8 billion at the end of 1984; the revenue has gone up from \$70-plus billion to \$130 billion; the deficit is as large as it was, shaved a few billion here and there; and the debt is more than twice as large. So we have a serious problem.

Let's not kid ourselves. If we cannot come to grips with the constitutional situation of this country, if we cannot bring some calm and stability—I think they are two sides to one coin—if people are not confident that we are going to stay together united and strong and pull in the