

THE CONSTITUTION DEBATE

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN LEADER OF THE NEW
DEMOCRATIC PARTY AND THE PRIME MINISTER

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I have a delayed answer to a question asked by Senator Roblin on October 23 concerning the inclusion of hydro-electric resources in the exchange of letters between the Right Honourable the Prime Minister and the Leader of the New Democratic Party. I am pleased to announce that the Prime Minister fully intended that hydro-electric power be covered in the exchange of letters between himself and Mr. Broadbent.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

IRAN—DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I have a note from the Secretary of State for External Affairs on the subject of the American hostages in Iran. Canada will normalize its relations with Iran once the hostages are released. This would entail repeal of the Iran Economic Sanctions Act and action to lift the export embargo and other measures now in effect against Iran.

Lifting measures imposed since the hostage-taking will not, however, mean that Canada would be ready to send arms or defence support equipment to Iran. Our present policy on arms sales would exclude Iran, as a country involved in continuing hostilities, from receiving such equipment.

Reopening the Canadian embassy in Tehran will not automatically follow the hostages' release. The decision on how and when to reopen the embassy will depend on circumstances at the time and other priorities.

THE CONSTITUTION

MOTION TO APPOINT SPECIAL JOINT COMMITTEE—DEBATE
ADJOURNED

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government) moved, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 45(1)(d):

That the Senate do unite with the House of Commons in the appointment of a Special Joint Committee to consider and report upon the document entitled "Proposed Resolution for a Joint Address to Her Majesty the Queen respecting the Constitution of Canada" published by the Government on October 2, 1980, and to recommend in their report whether or not such an Address, with such amendments as the Committee considers necessary, should be presented by both Houses of Parliament to her Majesty the Queen;

That ten Members of the Senate, to be designated at a later date, act on behalf of the Senate as members of the Special Joint Committee;

That the Committee have power to appoint from among its members such subcommittees as may be deemed advisable and necessary and to delegate to such subcommittees all or any of their powers except the power to report directly to the Senate;

That the Committee have power to sit during the sittings and adjournments of the Senate;

That the Committee have power to send for persons, papers and records, and to examine witnesses and to print such papers and evidence from day to day as may be ordered by the Committee;

That the Committee submit their report not later than December 9, 1980;

That the quorum of the Committee be twelve members, whenever a vote, resolution or other decision is taken, so long as both Houses are represented and that the Joint Chairmen be authorized to hold meetings, to receive evidence and authorize the printing thereof, when six members are present so long as both Houses are represented; and

That a Message be sent to the House of Commons to inform that House accordingly.

He said: Honourable senators, since the motion before the chamber has been rather well discussed during Question Period, I do not intend to speak for a great length of time.

I think all honourable senators welcome the fact that this very important and historical motion has arrived in the form of a message from the other place. I know that many honourable senators will wish to contribute to the debate. I know many of them still have a number of thoughts left after Question Period, queries regarding the Joint Address, and will make certain that we have a good debate in the Senate.

As honourable senators are aware, the motion includes a proposed deadline of December 9 for the joint committee to report back to the Senate and to the House of Commons. The longer the period of time available for public dialogue, the longer the period of time available for that committee to study the submissions which are going to undoubtedly come from many parts of the country, and the longer the period of time for witnesses to be heard, the better it will be for Canada. I am sure that many honourable senators feel the same way.

The concept of a joint committee is a positive government initiative to ensure the broadest possible discussion of this historic proposed Joint Address to Her Majesty. I mentioned a few moments ago that a government with a lack of concern about the need for full parliamentary debate of these proposals would have placed a resolution before the House of Commons, a resolution before the Senate, and sought the support of both houses where it has a majority and, in short order, sent the Joint Address to Westminster. This has not been the case.

The government believes that the joint committee is a better, more democratic, way, and the committee should be established as soon as possible. It is proposed that there shall be 15 members of that committee from the other place and 10 members from the Senate. Based on parliamentary precedents,