

tain concerns were expressed. Some dealt with what the hon. member has just mentioned; others pertained to the application of certain principles such as, respecting the electronic *Hanzard*, bilingualism and simultaneous translation.

Other matters will also have to be discussed, such as how the proceedings will be televised, the problems of setting up subcommittees. The hon. member will understand that for the sake of efficiency the committee might well decide to break up into various groups with a view to hearing the largest possible number of witnesses; the question might well come up then of which of those groups should have its proceedings televised. That is the type of practical, real problems, which we are not making up, and which will have to be faced. I feel it might be wise for the House leaders to try to avoid them and, ultimately, find an arbitrator who could make the decisions should problems arise.

In concluding, might I say that our favouring, at this time, the televising of the proceedings of the joint committee should in no way be interpreted as a means of delaying, in any way, the work or the report of the committee.

[English]

INQUIRY WHETHER REPORTING DEADLINE WILL BE EXTENDED

**Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa):** Madam Speaker, I am certainly glad the government has discovered that the degree of lighting in the committee will not be too strong to drive out witnesses and has decided to open up the process.

With that aside, I would now like to ask the Prime Minister an important question on the democratic process of constitutional change that is so integral to gaining acceptability in the federal state, not merely the substance of the program. Considering the delay, but not simply the delay, in getting the committee proceedings underway as a result of what happened in the other place, and considering the large number of people and organizations who want to present testimony to the committee, will the government be prepared to extend the deadline for the report of the committee by at least two weeks?

● (1425)

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Madam Speaker, I remind the leader of the New Democratic Party of conversations which were held by the House leaders of the three parties early in October. They were to the effect that the dates were flexible. The issue then was—and it remains—how long does this total issue remain before Parliament, before Parliament makes a final decision? My recollection of the negotiations then was that our House leader was flexible as to the number of days or weeks the resolution would stay at second stage before committee, providing we had some view of what would happen at the end. Would there be some agreement to vote on the whole issue within some reasonable time? I remember the conversation I had with the Leader of the Conservative party and the Leader of the New Democratic Party in my office the day before cabinet made its final decision as to timing, procedure and content. The problem was

### Oral Questions

discussed at that point too—that we should deal with this matter not in haste but with some sense of urgency. The argument I used then and use again was the commitment we made during the Quebec referendum.

**An hon. Member:** Were all members heard?

**Mr. Trudeau:** I recall the answers of both my interlocutors at the time. If they want to go into it further, I will indicate what was said at that time.

**An hon. Member:** Will all members be heard at least once?

**Mr. Broadbent:** If I understood the Prime Minister correctly—and I was listening with care—he said that he was prepared to extend in principle the time limit for the committee, but he wanted to link that in some way to the final time which would be taken both at committee stage and back in the House in terms of completing the bill. In particular, given the number of people who want to be heard at this time and the importance of us, as a parliamentary group, showing that we are interested in hearing the people of Canada, especially particular interest groups of central concern, is the Prime Minister prepared to say more precisely today what he has in mind, or is he saying that it is something which must be negotiated by House leaders?

**Mr. Trudeau:** I am saying the latter, Madam Speaker. I believe the Leader of the New Democratic Party, at least on this point, is agreed with our party that the matter must be dealt with within a certain framework. We discussed that last May and again in early October. I make no secret of the fact that we discussed timing also when I met the Leader of the Conservative party.

**Mr. Clark:** Very generally.

**Mr. Trudeau:** Very generally. I indicated to them then, and I indicate to them now that we want sufficient time to be devoted to this matter, to the hearing of witnesses and so on. That is why we were flexible in early October, and that is why the House leader is prepared to be flexible now. We are not flexible in the sense that we would prolong committee stage—

**Mr. Andre:** Flexible closure.

**Mr. Trudeau:**—if we had some reason to believe that when we reached the final stage we would still be faced with filibusters, bringing us into an indefinite amount of time. I believe that is the position of the New Democratic Party, as I understood it, in a general sense. There was no date agreed upon, but certainly there was an indication on their part which shared our part, that Canada must get on and settle this matter within some reasonable time. This is the context in which the House leader of our party will discuss with his opposite numbers.