

Policy of Ontario

S E C R E T

II. THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESS TO SEPTEMBER 1980

1. CCMC

Consultations will begin in Montreal July 8th with a round robin of federal and provincial opening positions on each of the twelve items. In each case, Mr. Chrétien will present the item, in some cases endorsing a best efforts draft, in some cases citing only basic principles, or taking a position between. For each item, each province will be entitled to state its opening positions.

It is anticipated that this process will take some two days. After it, the meeting will develop a masterplan for the rest of the Montreal session, for the session in Toronto July 15-18 and for the session in Vancouver, to begin later in July.

CCMC will be co-chaired by Mr. Chrétien and Mr. Romanow.

Mr. Chrétien and Mr. Romanow may wish to meet informally with the Press at the end of each round of the consultation.

2. Parliament

(a) Motions

Mr. Chrétien may wish to make a brief statement on motions each Monday to bring the House up-to-date on consultations held the preceeding week, progress made, difficulties encountered and possible changes in federal positions. This would help in the orderly presentation of the federal position prior to questions.

(b) Debate on the Constitution

There is general agreement that there should be a two-day debate in the House, centering upon the "Principles". The objectives would be to present the Government's approach to the consultations in a positive light, to stimulate interest in all regions and perhaps, to secure a measure of opposition endorsement of the Principles and bring some Western MPs, probably NDP, on side to some useful extent.

There are two ways to bring about this debate:

- to ask the House "to take note of the consultations and the principles upon which the federal approach is based". This procedure is common at Westminster and was used in the House in 1978 to bring about a debate on foreign affairs. It does not require consent or agreement, rules of relevance apply and the Government can end the debate at will; and,

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- to have a two-day debate on the adjournment. This would require all-party agreement to have the debate, to have it on this subject and to limit it to two days. In addition, party leaders would have to rely on party discipline to ensure relevance.

While at first sight the first of these seems to enjoy the balance of advantage, it does have the drawback of having the House appear somewhat wishy-washy, endorsing something very generally expressed.

(d) Parliamentary Committee on the electoral system as promised in the 1980 Throne Speech

To follow, when we have seen a memo for the Prime Minister, prepared by PCO and the House Leaders' office.

3. Cabinet

A small committee of Cabinet should be set up on an informal basis as a back-up for the Prime Minister and Mr. Chrétien, on the model of a similar committee on the referendum. Members might include:

Regan
Roberts
Blais
McGuigan
Axworthy
Lalonde

This group would advise on substance and also, in co-operation with Mr. Fleming, on communications, including the organization of Caucus in the regions. The Committee should meet Tuesdays at 8:30 a.m., the first such meeting to be Tuesday, July 1st.

4. Caucus

The constitutional negotiations should become the concern of one of the policy committees of Caucus, or perhaps of two or more brought together for this purpose. This committee, in co-operation with the Cabinet group would be responsible for:

- input and feedback from backbenchers to the negotiating process; and,
- development of a speaking campaign by Caucus members and other government supporters in all regions.

There should be a special Caucus meeting prior to the First Ministers' Conference in September.

5. Communications

Informal meetings of CCMC chairman with the press, role of special Cabinet group and Caucus committee have been discussed.

More generally, the Communications strategy and program will be under the aegis of the Canadian Unity Information Office. Mr. Pierre Lefebvre has been assigned in a supervisory capacity and an officer has been attached to each of the Working groups.

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Although the consultations themselves are closed, the Government must, as they continue, make clear that:

- the Government is committed to a new Constitution, made in Canada for all Canadians;
- its position is positive, far from fighting a rearguard action, laying new and exciting possibilities before the Canadian people;
- while many "items" must be carefully discussed and negotiated with provincial colleagues, the Constitution is everybody's business, not just a federal-provincial horror struggle.