

*Constitution Amendment, 1987*

afraid that, under the Meech Lake Accord, this will be impossible.

I would like to refer to the testimony of Professor Al Johnson before the joint committee on the Constitutional Accord. Professor Johnson is an expert on the subject, as a former deputy-minister in the provincial Government in Saskatchewan and with the federal Government. He recalled that it took a long battle to get medicare. At the national level, it was a long hard struggle, especially since the Premier of Ontario launched a full-fledged crusade against medicare. Professor Johnson explained that it was always a risky undertaking for the federal Government to initiate a new national, shared-cost program because of the two jurisdictions involved. It is a fact that any initiative of this sort would meet only opposition on the part of the provinces. Under these circumstances, making it possible for provincial governments to opt out with full compensation, without being compelled to meet national criteria, would frustrate any initiative aimed at setting up new or revised social programs, thereby creating enormous difficulties.

Mr. Speaker, I dare hope that my comments will cause some of my fellow citizens to ponder the impact of the Meech Lake Accord. I dare hope that my Laurier constituents in particular will think over these issues and my comments, and later on advise me of their opinion concerning this vital issue for the future of our country, because this is not an ordinary legislation we are dealing with here today, but the Constitution which is the fundamental law of the land. I, for one, feel that this debate is far from being over.

• (1250)

[English]

**Mr. Orlikow:** I have two questions for the Hon. Member, Mr. Speaker. First, when Premier Bourassa visited Manitoba and talked to the Francophone community he told them that he could not interfere and help them with their problems.

I want the Hon. Member for Laurier (Mr. Berger) to know that in the Province of Manitoba there has been a tremendous growth and increase in the number of students who are getting their entire education in the French language, not only the Francophone students whose parents naturally want them to maintain their language and culture, but Anglophone students who are getting their entire education in French immersion classes. I know something about that because my 11 year old granddaughter who has just moved into grade six is now in her seventh year of school and her entire education has been in the French language. That program is expanding in every part of Manitoba every year. The Meech Lake Agreement will not have injured what is going on in Manitoba and in other provinces.

When the Hon. Member suggests that because of the Meech Lake Agreement it will be difficult for the federal Government to sponsor new social programs, I say to him that there are just

as many constitutional experts who reject that argument as there are who support it.

I want to tell the Member also that I resent a member of the Liberal Party lecturing Members of this House and the people of Canada about the dangers of the diminution of the authority of the federal Government and the federal Parliament to initiate programs. In my 26 years in Parliament there was no decision by any government which did so much to reduce the power and the authority of the federal Government in the initiation and expansion of social programs than the decision of the Trudeau Liberal Government to do away with the way in which the share-cost programs for hospitalization, medical insurance and post-secondary education were put into effect.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Orlikow:** These were programs which had been developed mostly by Liberal Governments under which the federal Government encouraged provinces to get into them. It promised the provinces that the federal Government would pay a minimum of 50 per cent of the cost of the programs and it would pay more to the have-not provinces. When the Liberal Government under Mr. Trudeau decided it could not afford to continue, that Government told the provinces it was going to change the law and the rules and bring in established programs financing. What did that mean? It meant that the federal Government in any year would not increase its funding by more than the increase in the cost of living. Not only that, Mr. Speaker, it said to the provinces that it would give them this money in a lump sum; they did not have to spend it on post-secondary education, hospitalization or medicare, but could do anything they wanted, even use it to build roads.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Orlikow:** The Liberals, having done that, should not lecture us about the diminution of federal authority and federal power.

**Mr. Berger:** The Hon. Member talked about French immersion. This was the exact point that I made. I said that Canadians in their everyday lives are way ahead of our Governments.

**Mr. Orlikow:** With or without Meech Lake.

**Mr. Berger:** Why do our governments not have the courage to catch up to where Canadians are and put into our Constitution that we will not only preserve the *status quo*, protect language minorities, but that we will promote language minorities? The Member helped me, as far as I can see, in making my point.

On the question of social programs, Mr. Speaker, I notice the Member is wearing a rose-coloured tie. Obviously his version of history is probably through rose-coloured glasses.

**An Hon. Member:** This comes from a guy in a red tie.