

available to the provinces—and I understand that that does not originate in the Meech Lake Accord—are not acceptable to me.

Canada does not need stronger provincial governments; it needs a stronger federal government, and I deplore the influence which I fear the Meech Lake Accord may have on increasing the powers of the provinces at the expense of the federal government.

I think that the provision that substantial or significant amendments to the Constitution must require the unanimous consent of all of the provinces is totally unworkable. We have seen how that has hamstrung the great country to the south of us with their Constitution; and, even so, their requirements for constitutional amendment are not nearly as rigid as ours would be if we were to adopt the provisions of the Meech Lake Accord.

I listened with great interest to Senator Beaudoin's remarks on Senate reform a few moments ago and I commend Senator Beaudoin for the thoughtful analysis he gave to this important subject. I do not agree entirely with all the attitudes he took, but he was willing to state that he had not settled inflexibly on certain procedures and was willing to give further consideration to them. I do think, however, he should take a bit more thought about one statement he made to the effect that, if the Meech Lake Accord were not approved, the chances for Senate reform would become far more difficult. I suggest to him that exactly the contrary is the case: with the Meech Lake Accord in place, the requirement of unanimous consent of all of the provinces on anything of substantial importance relating to the Constitution of Canada—or, indeed, the many, many other aspects of federal-provincial relations—will make it extremely difficult to get approval for the kind of Senate reform that he then went on to refer to. So I come down on the other side of that argument from Senator Beaudoin. I would be interested in further debate on that, but I realize I am speaking today on the Meech Lake Accord and I do not want to change the focus of my own remarks into an analysis of Senate reform.

The other thing I should say, though perhaps it is not as important as what I have been saying, is that one has to deplore the kinds of negotiations that led to the drawing up of the document that constitutes the Meech Lake Accord—a hurried confrontation, and it was a confrontation, between the Prime Minister of Canada and the ten provincial premiers, lasting into the wee hours of the morning, at least on one or two occasions, and leading, then, to an enforced agreement, although perhaps that is too strong a word, but leading into an agreement which, I submit, had not been sufficiently and carefully tried, tested and thought out.

If we were to draw an analogy to a hockey game, I would be inclined to say that the ten premiers showed up to play for the provinces, the Prime Minister of Canada acted as the referee, but no one showed up to play for Team Canada.

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

**Senator Hicks:** It seems to me that the position of the federal government and the federal power in Canada was not given adequate consideration in the discussions that led to the Meech Lake Accord. I would hope that that might be rethought and changed.

That brings me, of course, to the next item, which is that the current Prime Minister and his ministers, including, I am sorry to say, the Leader of the Government in the Senate, seem to feel that there can be no changes made to the Meech Lake Accord. They have developed what seems to me to be a rather silly proposal: that the Meech Lake Accord has to be passed and ratified and left intact; that there can be a parallel accord which—and no one has faced up to this very clearly—will rectify the alleged difficulties inherent in the Meech Lake Accord itself. I cannot go along with that. I think it is ridiculous to take a position that the accord has to be passed exactly as it is now or abandoned.

That leads me to comment upon recent remarks—again mostly by the Prime Minister, but also by some other ministers—which are tantamount, really, to threatening Canadians by an appeal to Quebec nationalism and suggesting that, unless the Meech Lake Accord is adopted exactly as it is, Canada will in some way or other be blown asunder.

A very good article appeared in the *Montreal Gazette* of December 29, 1989, written by William Johnson. He heads the article: "Mulroney fans flames of Quebec separatism". He states:

Is Brian Mulroney deliberately trying to wreck Canada? The question is not rhetorical. I wish it were.

The Prime Minister of Canada is behaving so recklessly, so destructively for national unity, that his policy seems best summed up by the formula: *après moi le déluge*.

Or, in plain English, give me the Quebec nationalist vote and damn the consequences.

I hope that that is not the attitude of our Prime Minister, but Johnson is certainly a responsible journalist.

What makes me even more concerned about this is a letter to the editor of the *Ottawa Citizen*, dated January 7, from Michael D. Behiels, Chairman, Department of History, University of Ottawa. He commends Johnson for the position that he took in his article published in the *Montreal Gazette*, from which I just quoted. He concludes with this statement:

That a Canadian prime minister has participated in this process of articulating and disseminating an interpretation of recent events that fuels the flames of Quebec separatism is incredible and unacceptable. The Meech Lake Accord is an attempt to constitutionalize this distorted interpretation of recent constitutional achievements and should be rejected.

Before the situation deteriorates into an open and ultimately destructive clash of nationalisms, Québécois versus Canadian, the prime minister should reconsider his strategy of using and abusing history.