

Supply

because, under the proposed Meech Lake-Langevin Agreement, that will be denied to them, whether or not that is an oversight on the part of the drafters, I do not know. Had we been there, that would have been clarified.

There are annual First Ministers' conferences to be convened under the agreement. One is to be held on the economy and the second on constitutional matters. We were previously invited to constitutional conferences. We were to be there by virtue of Subsection (2) of Section 37. But that is something that has been taken away from the Territories now. There is no mention, no requirement, not even a possibility of them being there as participants at constitutional conferences when things of evident, direct interest to the people who live in the north are to be discussed.

The other matter of great concern that we have heard a lot about today already is the changes to the formula by which new provinces are created. In my way of thinking the evil deed was done in 1982. Prior to that time the creation of new provinces, whether, as we have seen, was the case with Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta or Newfoundland, was a matter between that area and the federal Government. The change came in 1982 when Pierre Elliot Trudeau was Prime Minister of Canada.

I do not know about the practical results of the proposals here. I suspect that it will not make that much difference. If we are going to get seven provinces, we are likely to get 10. But we should have been there at Meech Lake. We should have been there in the Langevin Block when these proposals were being drawn up and discussed.

What could be of more direct interest to the people of a part of Canada as a discussion as to how they can become a province, how they can join this great Confederation?

In summing up I want to say that the Meech Lake-Langevin Agreement as it stands, as much as we like to see Quebec coming into Confederation, is unacceptable to the people of northern Canada. They have seen provinces kind of bending over backward to accommodate the reluctant bride, Quebec. But they themselves who have only wanted, and always wanted, to be part of this family of Confederation, have found themselves cut out. They have been left outside of the circle of Confederation.

The question that we have on our minds, the question that we want an answer for, is quite simply this. Why, under these agreements, is it to be proposed that we who live north of the 60th parallel be excluded from the Canadian family of Confederation?

● (1650)

Mr. Allmand: Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to hear the Hon. Member for Western Arctic (Mr. Nickerson) state that he would support the resolution today. I think his action is a natural consequence of the new rules and the statement by the proposer that the motion should not be considered as one of confidence in the Government.

I accept fully his statement that while he supports the motion, this does not stand for non-confidence in his own Government and the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney). While I congratulate him on that, I want to take him up on one point.

He said that he was surprised by the position taken by the Liberal Party today because in 1979 the Hon. Member for Cochrane—Superior (Mr. Penner) and the Liberal Party opposed the proposals made by the then Conservative Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development at that time for more responsible government in the Territories.

I know the Hon. Member wants to be fair. I recall very well that while this Party stood for more responsible government in the Territories, we did not want those proposals to move ahead unless there was assurance that the aboriginal people were involved with that movement toward responsible government in the north and there was some mechanism to provide for the settlement of land claims at the same time.

I must say that we tried to make the point that these measures for responsible government should not go ahead without some assurance of involving the aboriginal people. In fact, the Government acted on that, both the Conservative Government of 1979 and the Liberal Government of 1980, so that we now have in the north a quite significant evolution toward responsible government with the aboriginal people involved. We now see in the Northwest Territories the Inuit and Dene involved in the Government. It is the same thing in Yukon. We fully support that.

The only reason we took the position we did in 1979 was not that we were opposed to that development in the North but that we wanted to ensure that the aboriginal people would be fully involved.

I wanted to make those comments. As I say, I appreciate the position of the Hon. Member, but I want the record to be clear on that.

Mr. Nickerson: Mr. Speaker, I think to a certain extent the Hon. Member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East (Mr. Allmand) is trying to rewrite history. I was in the House at that time. If I remember the arguments presented by his Party and the Hon. Member for Cochrane—Superior, they did not have too much to do with social justice. However, they had a lot to do with strict legalities and whether the letter of instruction sent by the then Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to the Commissioner of Yukon was legally correct and proper. That is my recollection of the arguments presented at that time.

One small but positive development toward constitutional development in the time the Hon. Member enjoyed the portfolio of Indian Affairs and Northern Development—and I compliment him on it—was that in 1976 or 1977 he allowed the elected executive committee of the territorial Government to be increased by one additional member.

It just so happens that when this took place, the member of the Legislative Assembly who was chosen to take this new