

Canada for the recommendations of Bélanger-Campeau, especially if they are radical”.

There is another committee looking at the amendment to the constitution formula. The minister will know as a former political scientist, as you know, we need unanimity to amend the Constitution of Canada. It is hardly a burning issue. It is a marginal issue. That is why so few people are, I understand, asking to appear before that committee.

The real problem or the most important problem is the fact that the Prime Minister of this country during the Meech Lake process said in effect time and time again that if Meech Lake did not pass Quebecers should consider themselves rejected by the rest of Canada.

That is patently not the case, and to me that is probably the major problem we have right now in Canada. The chief elected official in this country has created that problem by his grossly irresponsible way of treating that Meech Lake issue.

Mr. Hockin: Mr. Speaker, I have heard this criticism of the Spicer Commission. Let me just quote from a column this morning by Mr. Slinger in *The Toronto Star*. I do not read him every day, but I certainly read him today. He wrote:

The loudest critics of the Spicer Commission are in the mass media and the official opposition. What the critics have not suggested is a better idea. They haven't said what might meet their exacting standards.

He goes on to indicate:

The citizens' forum represents at least a hope for spinning our straw into nationhood. It is a wonderful thing to hear a roomful of ordinary folks, strangers until then, trying to put into words what they feel for this country, whatever else we have sat and listened to, people very like ourselves searching in plain language for a common purpose.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The hon. member's time is over.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, we are here today to debate a New Democratic Party motion urging parliamentarians to consider what the coming twenty months may entail for the future of Canada.

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In the course of those twenty months we will all be called upon to redefine the contract on which our country is based. Few generations of MPs have the opportunity to deal with such a momentous issue which goes straight to the heart of this country. I would not be exaggerating if I were to say that future historians will look upon the years 1991 and 1992 as their predecessors saw the 1864-1867 period, the time which led to Confederation.

[*English*]

Germany succeeded in a reunification plan within one year. The countries of eastern Europe overthrew a whole obsolete political order. The whole world, for a time, buried the cold war, and South Africa is finally burying apartheid at a time when Canada has been floundering in the midst of a paralysing constitutional crisis.

Many people thought that following the death of Meech the dust would settle and people would go about their business, that Canada would carry on as it had in the past. They were wrong. Like it or not, we are entering a period of intense soul searching, probably without precedent since 1867. The end product will be a different political and constitutional Canada.

The constitutional clock is ticking. It may be tempting; as some have said, it is impossible to come up with something that will satisfy Quebec, so why don't we let it go? I say we must take this opportunity to find a new deal that will satisfy Quebec, that will satisfy the west, and that will satisfy all parts of this great country. Otherwise we will all be the losers.

In 1864 the Fathers of Confederation—and they were only fathers then—faced an almost impossible task, and yet they succeeded in providing a framework that has given us a basis for Confederation which has lasted 124 years. Why can we, the men and women of Canada, now not be the mothers and fathers of a new Confederation?

To those who say let Quebec go, its price is too high, I say the price for separation is much higher for all of us.

To those who say the breakup of our country is just a matter of time, I say no. We can and we must reignite the political will to save our country.