

as an appropriate procedure, given that some of these issues, not some of the fundamental ones which he raises, such as the institutionalization of First Ministers' conferences—we all know where that could lead, as he has pointed out—but some of the ambiguities in specific sections, whether it be on spending power, distinct society versus distinct identity, or the issue of whether that provision in turn overrides the Charter and so on, it seems to me, Madam Speaker, not only could be but should be put to the courts so they can tell us now, when we look at this resolution and debate it in the House, what those provisions actually mean.

Mr. Nowlan: Madam Speaker, I think the Hon. Member was momentarily out of the House. I did comment on that and I thought it was a good idea.

Mr. Murphy: Madam Speaker, I would like to comment on the speech of the Hon. Member for Annapolis Valley—Hants (Mr. Nowlan). He had a lot of concerns and believed that there are many questions regarding this Accord. I believe those are legitimate concerns and I share some of them. I hope, as a result of the committee process, that we will have a number of people not only addressing those concerns but addressing a number of others which many people across the country have as to the exact wording and meaning of the Accord.

When the Member says that this Accord weakens Confederation—and that is the implication he left—he should also recognize that the constitutional package of 1981, for which I believe he voted, also was a vague package, a package going to the courts which enshrined a Charter of Rights the exact implications of which even at this stage many of us do not know when we passed it in those days. This is not something new. His Prime Minister and the Premiers did not do something new this year. This is an ongoing process and it will always be a problem when we deal with constitutional changes. The Member accepts and agrees with the suggestion of the Hon. Member for Saint-Henri—Westmount (Mr. Johnston) that that is a valid position. He is probably quite sincere in his opinion, but he must admit that those are not the same reservations that he himself had in 1981.

The Hon. Member referred to the New Democratic Party and our position on aboriginal rights. He inferred from the motion we have before us, which the Hon. Member for Yorkton—Melville (Mr. Nystrom) put forward, that we are concerned about the Yukon and the Northwest Territories being left out. He also somehow inferred that we are not concerned that aboriginal people were also left out. That can hardly be true. The Member has heard us speak on this issue. He knows that on Monday of this week the New Democratic Party had a motion calling for another First Ministers' meeting on aboriginal rights. In that same motion we again referred to the need to recognize the existing rights of the people from the Yukon and the Northwest Territories and the aboriginal people. That motion which was put to the House was not a motion of confidence in the Government. We explained that in the first speech that was made by a member

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of the NDP. The Hon. Member for Annapolis Valley—Hants voted against that amendment. I think there is a contradiction there, and before he criticizes us for putting forward these amendments on a consistent basis, twice this week, he should at least admit that we have been trying but sometimes he has not supported our efforts.

• (1320)

Mr. Nowlan: Madam Speaker, I was very brief in replying to the Hon. Member's first intervention and I appreciate the remarks of the Hon. Member in a sense. However, let us not kid ourselves and play games. I was in opposition for 18 years. We used to think up dream motions that we knew would be turned down.

The Hon. Member is correct. Because of the questions in the Meech Lake Accord over aboriginal rights and the north, I suppose, to be logical, I would vote against it, and a couple of Members did so. However, the Hon. Member knows as well as I do that that was a Supply motion. He may say that it is not a confidence motion, but the fact is that it dealt with one of the most integral parts of the whole parliamentary process, and that is Supply.

There is another rule that indicates that such a motion was not a motion of confidence, and the Hon. Member has said that it was not, but I have my interpretation. I used to sit on that side of the House and plot motions that would embarrass the Government. The Government would be caught between a rock and a hard place because the motion would be for motherhood. Yet the reality is that it is a vote of confidence.

I had no hesitation in voting with my Party on a confidence motion. While I may have some reservations about the interpretations of the Accord, I hope that the joint committee does resolve some of them and I hope that my fears are unfounded. That is a heck of a lot different from voting against a Government on a confidence motion.

I say to my friends in the NDP that I have the greatest respect for the Hon. Member for Yorkton—Melville (Mr. Nystrom). He is one of the most active speakers in the House. I do not want to be too partisan because I hope that this matter can be debated in a political but not a partisan way. That is what I resent so much about the Senate.

When the Hon. Member said that he was a leopard that did not change his spots, I had a little dirty thought. I thought, yes, sometimes that fellow is pretty strong and perhaps has some spots. However, in this case, given the history of his Party with the Regina Manifesto, Woodsworth, Coldwell and Lewis, he is a tabby-cat. That Party is a tabby-cat. NDP used to mean "New Democratic Principle". Some of us thought it meant "No Damned Principles", but now it means "No Disturbing Polls". They want to ensure that they do not rock the boat and perhaps they will slip through.

Mr. Marchi: Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member for Annapolis Valley—Hants (Mr. Nowlan) has spoken passionately about a Constitution that needs to reflect the essence of