

Government Orders

That was one issue which was difficult to understand because it was never part of the five proposals put forward by Mr. Bourassa for adhesion to the Canadian Constitution. In the five proposals that he made, he never mentioned at all what would be required for the acceptance of new provinces, especially provinces from the north. However, once the Meech Accord was published, the Langevin accord was published, we saw that that was in there. When we tried to amend it, we could not understand why the federal government and Quebec would have been so intransigent in not agreeing to something more reasonable when it had not been the basis of their proposal in the first place.

I would hope that there would not only be a fair amendment formula for the Northwest Territories and the Yukon in any new constitutional amendment formula, but that also there would be greater recognition in the Constitution for aboriginal rights and for aboriginal self-government.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, I wish to say just a few words on the resolution before the House today. It calls upon Parliament to create a special joint committee to study the amending formula, which in reality is the whole process of amending our Constitution. They take us into the area of a constituent assembly, constitutional conventions, the wisdom or lack thereof of a referendum to determine the Constitution of this country, as well as technical things like how many provinces or what majority in the House of Commons it may take to amend the Constitution of Canada.

I want to be very direct with the few concerns that I have about the internal process of constitutional change among the parties in this House. I have been through the process now about three times: in the joint committee back in 1980-1981 for patriation of the Charter of Rights, in the joint committee on the Meech Lake Accord in July and August 1987 and, more recently, last spring on what we call the Charest committee of the House of Commons looking at the modification of the Meech Lake Accord.

One of the concerns I have is that the Prime Minister has to be more forthright and more direct with the other parties in the House when it comes to forming a committee, sharing information, and trying to achieve what we all want in this House with a few exceptions,

which is a strong, united Canada recognizing all of our diversities and differences.

When this committee was to be struck there was no phone call to the Leader of the New Democratic Party or, to the best of my knowledge, to the Leader of the Liberal Party, or to my friends in the Bloc Québécois or anybody. There was no call. There was no consultation with the critics on the opposition side. It was the same when the Spicer citizens' forum was struck. There was no consultation.

[*Translation*]

In Quebec, Mr. Speaker, when Premier Bourassa decided to appoint the Bélanger-Campeau Commission, he had many consultations with Opposition Leader Jacques Parizeau. They met several times and there were consultations between the Liberal Party and the Parti québécois concerning the two co-chairmen of the commission. Consultations went on over several days. It was the same thing in the other two or three provinces where they established commissions or committees on the Constitution, Mr. Speaker.

But here in this House there was not even a phone call from the Prime Minister to the Leader of the Opposition or to the hon. member for the Yukon concerning the appointment of the chairman of this commission. Perhaps Mr. Spicer was the appropriate choice, perhaps not. But since we are dealing with the Constitution of Canada, now is not the time to show partisanship, because in principle this issue ought to unite the political parties and the Canadian population. But there was no consultation between the Prime Minister and the other members of the House.

[*English*]

I would have thought after the problems around the process of the Meech Lake Accord that the Prime Minister would have done that. We had today, for example, the tabling of a discussion paper about what is going to be referred to this special joint committee. Once again, that was not shared with the opposition before the decision was made to strike this particular committee.

I say to the Prime Minister that if we want to make this work, and we had better make this work, it is easier to happen if the Prime Minister and the minister responsible were to treat this in a more non-partisan way, in a more apolitical way. It would be better for this House