

Constitution Acts

have enough sympathy to accept this amendment. I think that was very unfortunate.

I call on government Members today, however, to think of this motion as the first step they can take in redressing what I think is a really discriminatory action on the part of all of us in the Meech Lake Accord. In Motion No. 204, the Hon. Member for the Yukon has called on the Government to include government leaders of the Yukon and the Northwest Territories in all First Ministers constitutional conferences. It seems to me to be a very simple and democratic step to take.

It is indeed insulting that there has not been representation from the North. I am not talking about token consultation but about full representation with duly elected leaders from the Yukon and the Northwest Territories sitting down in an equal position with leaders of other provinces.

Speaking as a southerner, I think we miss a great deal when we do not hear directly from representatives of the North. We know how much we have learned from the Hon. Member for the Yukon today and from the many other speeches she has made. When I have visited the North, I have been fascinated and I would like to learn much more about the special needs and circumstances of northerners. Their health services are much different from ours, and perhaps we have something to learn from the kind of pattern that has evolved there. There is a higher birth rate in the North than in most other parts of Canada and the need for child care programs are different and perhaps much greater.

As Hon. Members who spoke previously pointed out, the North has now had long experience with effective elected Government, and the Northwest Territories is moving toward a division about which most southerners do not know. We need to hear about these things from the leaders of the North sitting at the table of First Ministers speaking in an equal way on behalf of the territories. I urge government Members not to talk this out today but to allow it to go to a vote so that we can see how all Hon. Members feel about this issue.

Mr. Penner: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. This afternoon, on a motion involving people living in Canada's North, representatives of the three Parties have spoken. The views have been expressed clearly, and I have not heard any dissenting views. Therefore, I would ask you to seek unanimous consent of the House that this question be put now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Since this is Private Members' Hour, any Hon. Member rising is entitled to speak. I noticed that the Hon. Member for Québec-Est (Mr. Tremblay) is rising, so I recognize the Hon. Member for Québec-Est.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel R. Tremblay (Québec-Est): Mr. Speaker, I believe that the real problem is the failure to grant provincial status to the Territories. It must be clearly understood that their becoming provinces would entail fundamental changes in Confederation. To deal with this point first, the Territories

recognize that provincehood would be a burden at this time. This is one reason, no doubt the most important, why they do not consider provincehood a practical proposition in the short term. Those who followed . . .

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Order, please. There is about seven minutes left on this Friday afternoon. I would like to be able to hear the Hon. Member for Québec-Est.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Tremblay (Québec-Est): As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, those who followed the hearings of the Special Joint Committee on the Meech Lake Accord may perhaps remember what Gordon Robertson said about this.

He spoke as someone who had been Commissioner of the Northwest Territories for 10 years, as well as Secretary to the Cabinet and Cabinet Secretary for Federal-Provincial Relations. He said:

They certainly could not finance on the present basis of federal-provincial financing. The grant the northern territories get in lieu of equalization provides a payment to the northern territories that is proportionately far in excess of what any province gets under equalization.

This is nothing new for Northerners, Mr. Speaker, nor for the territorial Governments, as Tony Penikett, Head of the Government of the Yukon, said before the Special Joint Committee:

The Yukon and the Northwest Territories are not provinces now; nor do we seek provincial status at this time. Few people in the Yukon and the Northwest Territories would argue that we have reached the point where provincial status makes sense. We know keenly our limitations: our small, scattered population; our slim economic resources; our inadequate transportation system.

In a word, Mr. Speaker, northern residents have the right to benefit from all the range of services offered to other Canadians, no matter where they live. At the present time, and in the near future, the Territories could not in any case provide those services, and northern residents would not obtain them without considerable assistance from the federal Government.

That is one of the main reasons which explains why the territorial governments are not seeking the status of province at this time, and they are not considering such a move in the short term. That is why I cannot support the resolution now before the House which would in effect grant them such a status indirectly or partially, not in the future but immediately. This leads me, Mr. Speaker, to broach another point of the Accord that has been criticized, the fact that there must be unanimous agreement for the creation of new provinces.

The Accord allows us to reach an objective, the recognition of the principle of the equality of provinces: the amending formula provision is the reflection of that principle. It is important for Canadian solidarity that all provinces have an equal say in matters that affect the fundamental nature of Confederation. The creation of a province is one of those fundamental questions. It has an effect on the make up of our