

Government Orders

accountable to the people of the territories and, hence, cannot represent us.

Like other Canadians, we deserve to have our own accountable representative at the constitutional table. No other part of the country is denied a voice at the constitutional table like we are. As I said earlier, the recent practice has been to invite the leaders of the territories to some meetings, not all. The invitation is at the discretion of the Prime Minister who is supposed to be representing us because they will not allow our territorial leaders.

If the northern government leaders are invited, they are shown into the meeting room, permitted to make a statement, and ushered out again. This situation is unacceptable. It is demeaning, and it is insulting.

Under the Constitution Act, 1982, the Governments of the Northwest Territories and the Yukon were assured of participation at constitutional conferences when an agenda item directly affected the territories. The 1983 constitutional amendment also assured them of participation in constitutional conferences dealing with aboriginal issues.

In 1983, 1985, and 1987, the territories were invited to the constitutional table. At constitutional officials' meetings held between 1983 and 1987, representatives of the territories were full participants.

The territorial governments also attended some annual premiers' meetings but were excluded from the crucial August, 1986 Edmonton Premiers' Conference on the Economy. That conference dealt with Quebec's constitutional demands and it was at that conference that the premiers agreed to make Quebec's demands the constitutional priority.

• (1650)

The territories were told at the time, however, that the discussions did not affect them and they were not allowed to participate in—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Plamondon: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The hon. member for Richelieu on a point of order.

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu): I remind the government that if this bill is so important, why is it that

again we do not have a quorum in the House? This is the third time!

And the count having been taken:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I see that we do have a quorum. The hon. member for Nunatsiak may continue his presentation.

[*English*]

Mr. Anawak: Mr. Speaker, I am sure that if the hon. member considers it a very important—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Corbeil: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The Hon. Minister of Labour on a point of order.

Mr. Corbeil: I just want to ask you if it is in the code of ethics of this House for an hon. member to disappear behind the curtain immediately after having requested that the quorum be checked. If he is interested in having a quorum, he should remain in his place to make sure that it is the case instead of wasting the time of the House.

Mr. Lapierre: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker. You are perfectly aware that it is the responsibility of the government to maintain a quorum in this House. Obviously, there has been much negligence on the part of the government and the Minister of Labour has reason to be annoyed because his colleagues do not think that this debate is important. But if some hon. members ask to call quorum, it is out of respect for

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I regret to interrupt the Hon. Member but once again, messages have been sent and received. Now I give the hon. member for Nunatsiak the opportunity to address his colleagues.

[*English*]

Mr. Anawak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am sure that the hon. member who raised that phoney objection was probably not very interested or he would not keep telling us about the lack of quorum.

The territories were subsequently shut out of the Meech Lake and Langevin Block meetings. In September, 1988, the current Prime Minister admitted that the territorial leaders had been treated like the poor cousins of Confederation. He pledged to change this situation, but that promise was made just before the last election