

Government Orders

I must remind this House and members of the public that the Liberal Party of Canada was the first party, as a matter of fact, to accept the five basic proposals put forward by Mr. Bourassa in 1985 for constitutional change for adherence to the Constitution.

Later, those five proposals were put into a format known as the Meech and then the Langevin Accord. At that time, there was an addition of other measures which were not present when Mr. Bourassa made his original five proposals.

I have stated—it is well known—that Mr. Chrétien, the leader of the Liberal Party will appear before the Bélanger-Campeau commission on Monday and will be the only leader of any political party to appear before that commission to stand up for Canada, the federal system and Canadian unity. He will be the only leader to speak for Canada before that very important commission.

In conclusion, let me say that from 1970 to 1972 I sat as a member of the last Special Joint Committee of the House of Commons and the Senate with respect to the Constitution. I have the report here, *The Constitution of Canada: Final Report, 1972* which was a very comprehensive study.

We spent two years going to towns and cities, large and small, in this country listening to Canadians with respect to the Constitution. We at that time supported and backed the Victoria formula as the best formula for constitutional amendment. I think what is important is that leadership has to be shown if we are to truly unite this country once again and turn back the tide of separatism on all sides.

Quebec was not rejected at the time of the Meech Lake Accord. Eight provinces were in favour of Quebec's proposals. The perception was an unfortunate one coming out of the fact that the Meech Lake Accord failed. Certain resolutions at Sault Ste. Marie and other municipalities gave the impression that Quebec was not wanted. I want to say that Quebec is dearly wanted. There is a great appreciation in this country for Quebec's language and culture. thousands of children all over this country are doing immersion in French. Both parts of Canada would be great losers if this country were to divide.

• (1610)

What we need is leadership. What we need is hope. I hope that this committee, although it has certain limitations, will be able to provide us with some of that hope and some of that unity.

Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Nunatsiak):

[*Editor's note: Member spoke in Inuktitut.*]

Mr. Speaker, I just want to ask some questions of the hon. member with regard to the north. We have been feeling rather left out as northerners and as aboriginal people. I do not think that is a surprising statement because, as we heard earlier, yesterday the north and aboriginal people were ignored once again in terms of the Spicer commission, the Citizens' Forum on the Future of Canada.

I just wonder what hope do we have because right now under the amending formula, although in the past there has always been bilateral negotiations between the Government of Canada and any territory wanting to become a province, under the amending formula that is a change. With all of those roadblocks in the way, how can we be assured that our desires, our aspirations will be recognized in any form, allowing for this present government's attitude in ignoring the wishes of the aboriginal people as well as northerners?

Mr. Allmand: Mr. Speaker, historically new territories were admitted to the Confederation by a simple vote of the territorial assembly and the federal Parliament. This was the case with respect to Newfoundland in the late forties. It was also the case with respect to the other provinces at a much earlier period. One was to presume that if one day the Yukon and the Northwest Territories were to become full provinces, they would do that through a decision taken in their own legislative assemblies and in this Parliament.

However, since the Constitution of 1982 it became a case where they required seven out of ten provinces with 50 per cent of the population to accept a new province. Then with the Meech Accord it was recommended to be even more stringent.

Finally, we in the Liberal Party presented an amendment to the Meech Accord to permit the admission of the northern territories on a basis that was somewhat similar to what had taken place historically, on a one-to-one basis.