

period provided for in the tariff. As a result, without an amendment to the Customs Act, importers will be unable to obtain refunds of duties overpaid and accrued interest paid for the full retroactive period.

Honourable senators, this bill provides the Department of National Revenue, Customs and Excise, with the authority to refund duties overpaid in all instances where the Governor in Council has ordered that lower rates apply retroactively. It ensures that all importers are treated equitably with respect to payment of interest on their claims, and it ensures that appeal procedures currently provided by the Customs Act also apply to all importations affected by such Orders in Council. Honourable senators, this bill, in the interest of fairness and equity, should be passed as quickly as possible. I would recommend it for second reading.

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, Senator Doody gave me a copy of his speaking notes and other material. He has clearly explained the purpose of the bill, which is to correct an inequity that flowed from certain amendments to the Customs Act, particularly in the harmonized system project.

I suggest we give the bill second reading now. If Senator Doody can produce someone for tomorrow, in Committee of the Whole, we can ask these questions of the minister or his representative at that time.

Motion agreed to and bill read second time.

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senator, when shall this bill be read the third time?

—On motion of Senator Doody, bill referred to Committee of the Whole at the next sitting of the Senate.

INTERNAL ECONOMY, BUDGETS AND ADMINISTRATION

SIXTY-EIGHTH REPORT OF COMMITTEE ADOPTED

Hon. C. William Doody (Deputy Leader of the Government), for Hon. Roméo LeBlanc, moved the adoption of the sixty-eighth report of the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is it agreed, honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Motion agreed to and report adopted.

SIXTY-NINTH REPORT OF COMMITTEE ADOPTED

Hon. C. William Doody (Deputy Leader of the Government), for Hon. Roméo LeBlanc, moved the adoption of the sixty-ninth report of the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is it agreed, honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Motion agreed to and report adopted.

[Senator Doody.]

MEECH LAKE ACCORD

DEBATE AND PROCESS—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming the debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Olson, P.C., calling the attention of the Senate to the debate and process concerning the Meech Lake Accord.—(*Honourable Senator Olson, P.C.*).

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, as mentioned earlier, Senator Olson will yield to Senator David.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Paul David: Honourable senators, my motion has been agreed to, although late. I will give the speech I had prepared for the beginning of today's sitting.

Honourable senators, the rejection of the Meech Lake Accord by two Canadian provinces and the assembly of native chiefs is a new painful experience for the people of Quebec. After three long years of debate, the sudden changes of these last few weeks have shown how fragile the Canadian parliamentary system could be and how vulnerable to intolerable procedural devices. The latest melodramatic episodes have tarnished our national and international image. Non one in our country can take pride or feel honour in what has happened. As a Quebecer, I feel a deep sorrow comparable to what I felt during the events of 1970 and 1981-82.

Like it or not, the defeat of Meech Lake is a setback for our constitutional development and our maturity as a nation. This rejection has obviously encouraged a large segment of the Quebec population that aspires to sovereignty-association or independence. I sincerely believe that the death of Meech betrays the intent of the Fathers of Confederation who in 1867 had understood that Canada's future depended on a difficult compromise of balanced but generous tolerance between the two leading groups in our new nation.

Meech is no more. Politicians hasten to find scapegoats and shift the blame onto their opponents. Historians will dissect what actually happened, their task made easier by the passage of time and historical developments. But we who live through the event have the thankless task of rebuilding what we destroyed. I must point out with great regret the harmful role our own House played in this issue.

But to be objective, I must also tell Quebecers that it is wrong to say that the rejection of the Meech Lake Accord is a rejection of Quebec by all English Canadians or at least by the majority of premiers who represent them.

Premiers Vander Zalm of British Columbia, Getty of Alberta, Devine of Saskatchewan, Peterson of Ontario, Buchanan of Nova Scotia and Ghiz of Prince Edward Island respected their commitment and were faithful allies of the people of Quebec throughout these three years. I take this opportunity to thank them and express my admiration for them. Premier McKenna of New Brunswick, after criticizing the imperfections of the Accord for a long time, nevertheless made a noble effort of reconciliation by submitting a list of proposals to be the