

*Government Orders*

Then, and even later, as we were on the precipice and in spite of having said there was a three-year deadline that could not in fact be ignored, the Prime Minister and his government shifted again. They thought that they should have a referral to the Supreme Court of Canada to see whether or not the time line could be extended.

[*Translation*]

I believe I have just shown quite clearly that the Prime Minister and his government have known failure in the constitutional process. The committee is urging the House to appoint today is a reaction to that failure, a reaction to a lack of sensitiveness towards Canadians, a reaction designed to reset the sights, if that is possible. I sincerely hope it is not too late.

[*English*]

It was really the Prime Minister, through a lack of sensitivity and through an inappropriate process, who killed Meech Lake and what could have been salvaged from it. For example, many constitutional experts say that three out of five amendments could have been passed with the 7-50 formula, that is, seven provinces with 50 per cent of the population saying yes. Those were immigration, distinct society, and opting out of federal programs with full compensation which is something that can happen now. We all know that that 7-50 formula could have given us those particular requests that Quebec wanted. Only two of the amendment would have required unanimity. They were the provincial role in the appointments to the Supreme Court of Canada and a veto for Quebec on constitutional amendments.

By virtue of packaging the Accord in this particular way, the Prime Minister set up an objective that was virtually impossible to reach. He rolled the dice too late, and Canada lost.

[*Translation*]

He put the bar too high and missed, and that is unfortunate. It is unfortunate for Canada and for all Canadians.

[*English*]

I want to talk briefly about the amending formula. Many of you will know that there are presently two concurrent amending formulae for the Constitution of Canada. One requires, as I indicated just a moment ago, seven provinces with at least 50 per cent of the popula-

tion to support certain proposals. In these cases there is a three-year deadline.

• (1200)

The division of powers to which I have referred, and which is to me the most significant challenge that we have before us right now, can in fact be changed by virtue of the 7-50 formula, that is, seven province agreeing and that they have 50 per cent of the population.

Yes, there are some matters that require unanimity and they have no time limit, such as the changing of the amending formula and clearly, we should be looking at that.

One of the reasons that Meech Lake failed is because this amending formula that the Prime Minister proposed had no real significant mechanism for public input. There were obviously some discussions. There was in fact some input, but the process of input was flawed. People along the way felt that the deal was made. It was a seamless web that could not be undone. They felt left out. They felt as if they were being had.

Let us stress that there is nothing in the 7-50 formula or in the formula proposed in the Meech Lake Accord that would not have permitted the Prime Minister and his government from having a significant, detailed, ongoing public input for all Canadians from throughout the whole nation.

I think it is important when we talk about the 7-50 formula to take just a moment to try to understand where it came from. Many members will recall that the former Prime Minister, Mr. Pierre Elliott Trudeau, felt that he could, as Prime Minister, patriate the Constitution. We will recall as well, that he was supported by premiers Davis of Ontario and Hatfield of New Brunswick. However, eight premiers of those other eight provinces opposed this patriation in this way and proposed this 7-50 formula which Mr. Trudeau accepted.

[*Translation*]

In my opinion, it is extremely important to understand that the 7/50 formula is not perfect. Very few are, but this one, nevertheless, contains some positive elements. It is obvious that this formula does not adequately meet the aspirations of Quebec men and women. I suggest it was not the formula *per se*, but the way it was used which caused the failure of the Meech Lake Accord. Consultations were inadequate. They should have been ongoing. There was also the government's uncompromising attitude towards changes suggested by the Liberal Party as