

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I hesitate to interrupt the Hon. Member for Oshawa (Mr. Broadbent), but is there unanimous consent to give the Hon. Member some extra time?

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, we agree to allow the Leader of the New Democratic Party to continue his remarks. Of course, we take it that he will be reasonable and take into consideration the fact that members from our Party want to speak to this important motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is it agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Broadbent: I thank Members of the House for their consideration.

Following the Meech Lake agreement, I questioned the Prime Minister about the need for a specific commitment by the First Ministers to be put in the Accord to have additional meetings to deal with the question of aboriginal rights, particularly the right to self-government. At that time, the Prime Minister responded with openness and said that he was prepared to rethink the position that was taken at Meech Lake. I hope that rethinking process is taking place with great seriousness.

An appropriate metaphor has been used with reference to the inclusion of the aboriginal peoples with their rights in the Constitution. It is the metaphor of the circle. The circle of our Constitution simply is not complete. I am convinced that after the appropriate decision is made in the National Assembly in the Province of Quebec, for the first time Quebec will be openly making a positive decision to be part of the Canadian federation. That is an important part of closing the circle. However, we must now include the aboriginal Canadians. It is unthinkable to close the circle without them because the Canadian family must include all of its members within the circle.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, native leaders, the Prime Minister and the Opposition are agreed that if during the past five years, Quebec had taken part in the struggle for constitutional recognition of native peoples, our chances of success would have been greater. Now that Quebec has signed the Constitution, we must try again.

The Prime Minister has stated that genuine co-operation is necessary to see that justice is done to Canada's native peoples. We can give these words muscle by adding to the Accord a constitutional conference of First Ministers on native rights, especially the right of self-government.

We can respond to the concerns of native peoples and the citizens of Canada's North.

On May 4 this year, the Prime Minister said that the Meech Lake Accord was not about the possibility of creating new provinces but about bringing Quebec back into the Constitution.

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Native leaders and leaders of the Governments of Yukon and the Northwest Territories are glad to see that Quebec has been brought back into the Constitution, although they do believe that the Accord could have disastrous consequences for native peoples and the people of the north.

We now have the time and the opportunity to improve the Accord in such a way that it enhances and does not restrict the aspirations of Canada's native peoples and the residents of Yukon and the Northwest Territories.

[*English*]

Now is the time to complete the circle of confederation. Supporting this motion will move us clearly in that direction.

● (1200)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions and comments? There being no questions and comments, debate.

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this debate which follows a very historic event in the history of our country, that is, the unanimous agreement and signing last week of the Accord with respect to an amendment to our Constitution which says: "Welcome back Quebec. Welcome to Canada as a full and participating member of our Confederation".

I think it important at this point to reiterate, and again from time to time as we discuss the matter, not only here on the floor of the House of Commons, but generally in Parliaments of the provinces of our country, that we have taken this step to make our country whole, as the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) has said, and to have a most important part of Canada feel at home and part of this union.

I was gratified to hear, not only from the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Turner) but from the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Broadbent) as well, in their formal responses on behalf of their Parties their unequivocal approval of this Accord. I say to them that the position they took was positive and constructive, coming as it did at a time when it seems to me we are moving towards a Canada that does in fact constitutionally reflect the realities we face. It is in that spirit that I address this debate.

The Leader of the New Democratic Party has, in his motion, raised a couple of issues which bear full debate and consideration. Let me say at the outset that I want to deal with these issues as best I can in a non-partisan way, because I believe that is the kind of debate we should have with respect to constitutional matters. However, I have to say that I do not share the basic premise of the motion put forward by the Leader of the New Democratic Party. He is dealing with two elements in his motion, the position of those important citizens of our country who reside in the Territories and our aboriginal people, and that the position we have taken as a Government and as a Parliament with respect to these people constitutionally has been anything but supportive. In fact we are making progress, and I want to deal with the realities of what has transpired and what we now face. I want also to give my