

*Government Orders*

subsequently approved by this House could become part of our Constitution.

As the Prime Minister knows, there can be no constitutional amendment unless, in addition to being adopted by this House and by the provinces, the proposal is also considered by the Senate. Whatever the Prime Minister's views may be about the Senate, he cannot ignore its role in the process of constitutional amendment, especially if it is his desire to resolve more quickly the present impasse.

In short, I am saying it would be helpful if the Prime Minister spelled out more precisely than he has done today for Canadians the actual process and outcome of it that he has in mind. For example, he has said that he does not agree with my suggestion to call an immediate meeting of himself and all the premiers to discuss possible solutions to the impasse. Yet, as we all know, the Constitution makes it clear that the provinces, and therefore their premiers, have a pivotal role to play in most constitutional amendments.

Are we to take it that if there is passage by this House of a companion resolution, which may or may not be the same as that proposed by Premier McKenna, that the Prime Minister will then convene the premiers to discuss it? Do we have a commitment by the Prime Minister that he will in fact present such a resolution to the premiers and ask them to have it approved by their legislatures? What is the timeframe he has in mind for all this? How does he fit this timeframe into the deadline for the 1987 constitutional amendment which, as he has reminded us in his speech, is June 23 of this year?

• (1540)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, many Canadians who heard the Prime Minister's speech last week had the impression that he agreed with Mr. McKenna's proposals. Subsequently, the Prime Minister stated that tabling the McKenna proposals in the House did not mean that he agreed with and endorsed those proposals.

[*English*]

As the Prime Minister said in his televised speech: "I believe it is possible to extend a hand to Canadians who feel they were overlooked by the Meech Lake Accord"

and, with the process now before us, this House "can by such an initiative signal its desire to reach out to all Canadians to allay any concerns they may still have about the Accord".

Also in his televised speech last Thursday night, the Prime Minister stated that the 1987 Accord is "not perfect". Canadians will therefore expect the Prime Minister to inform the House and the proposed committee as to how he wants to respond to the concerns he agrees do exist.

We recognize that all of the premiers have not given strongly positive responses to Premier McKenna's proposals. However, at this stage, we continue to believe that we should give the proposed committee a chance to try to stimulate more dialogue and possible consensus on this crucial matter.

It is important to keep in mind that, as Canadians, we have achieved our goals of nation building only through dialogue leading to compromise and consensus.

The proposals before us today give us an opportunity to take a very positive step toward achieving greater national unity through the exercise of tolerance, goodwill and generosity. Therefore it is important that the Prime Minister undertake a dialogue between himself and all the premiers, but in particular with those who appear to be furthest apart, with the aim of achieving consensus.

I sincerely hope that the Prime Minister and the premiers of all the provinces will carry out such discussions in the spirit of compromise and conciliation which I believe is truly necessary.

As I have said, it is time to roll up our sleeves and get down to the business of negotiating constitutional change to make this country stronger and more united.

Canadians from all across this country must be active participants in the dialogue. We need the people of Quebec, just as we need the people of Atlantic Canada, just as we need the people of Ontario, of western Canada and of the north. They are all needed and valuable.

Canada is more than the sum of its parts. I believe Canada is worth preserving. I believe Canada must be preserved.