

*Supply*

would have been no Bélanger-Campeau Commission and he would not have had to testify. That is the truth, Mr. Speaker, and it should be said. These things should be said quite frankly. We must be open about these things and not let ourselves be fooled.

Mr. Speaker, of course you realize that I have something of a stake in this debate, whether I like it or not. As fate had it, I was again in the midst of the debate on Meech Lake last spring. I tried to make an honest contribution to unravelling the constitutional impasse we had reached at that time. Colleagues from all parties represented in this House at the time, and I, got together to try and find a solution to this problem. We produced a report which was subsequently named the Charest Committee report and was in fact ratified by the provincial Premiers on June 9.

If we take a good look at the report, at the agreement signed on June 9, we see that the Charest report was indeed ratified. I have a comparative study of the two documents, and for all practical purposes, everything the parliamentary committee suggested was approved by the provincial Premiers, with a few exceptions. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, Meech Lake was not ratified, despite the June 9 accord.

Mr. Speaker, you will recall that at the time, our national leaders made it clear to the Canadian public and to those who had to make the decisions that, if Meech Lake was not approved, we would be facing a difficult situation. Well, today it comes as no surprise, especially after the Quebec Liberal Party's convention, that we are indeed facing very serious problems, not insurmountable but very serious nevertheless.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good time to stop and consider where we are and remember that Meech Lake contained some very clear provisions that provided that once the accord was ratified, subsequent constitutional debate would take place in a certain order. That was one of the advantages of Meech Lake. Not only would it let us catch up with history, because it was intended to obtain the Quebec government's approval of the constitutional document repatriated in 1981-82, it was also a way of providing an orderly sequence for subsequent events. For instance, in the June 9 document it was agreed that there would be subsequent discussions on Senate reform and discussions followed by initiation of the process to

deal with the claims of Canada's native people. That was the advantage of Meech Lake, Mr. Speaker.

As a result, non-ratification—since ratification was supposed to give us an orderly sequence—means that we are now faced with a certain lack of order in our constitutional debate, Mr. Speaker. It is the kind of disorder which prompts everyone to return to base, review his positions, re-assess positions taken in the past, consult Members of Parliament and the population. Mr. Speaker, that is where we stand right now. And it is in that context that we should consider the resolution advocated by the New Democratic Party.

Mr. Speaker, our socialist colleagues in the New Democratic Party are proposing a seven-prong resolution, if my count is right. I want to deal quickly with each in turn. The first goes like this:

(1) representation by all sides of Parliament and provincial and territorial legislatures, not just governments;

Suggesting that governments do that in future does not create a major problem. I can even go further than that. There is no need for a day's debate to get the opposition parties and the government involved. If that is not precisely what we are doing today, I have no idea what involving opposition parties and government means. And what about parliamentary committees like we had about Meech, Mr. Speaker, what was that if not involving the governments and opposition parties of practically all legislatures?

Mr. Speaker, I am saying this because there is no need to pass a resolution to invent that. The mechanisms are already there. So for now I do not see any point—I have no idea how my colleagues feel about this—in voting on an issue like this one, considering that our entire political system is indeed based on these principles.

The second suggestion is to ensure

(2) the inclusion of others with a stake in the outcome, such as Aboriginal nations, —official language minorities, business and labour, women and cultural communities;

Mr. Speaker, these groups are represented in our political system, they are structured and organized. No problem there either. I admit I feel no need to vote on this suggestion to endorse or confirm it, for this is something I take for granted.

• (1530)

The third point, Mr. Speaker, is this: