

in the Senate by ourselves. We do not have to wait for the House of Commons to launch a resolution in that regard, or for the legislatures to launch resolutions in that regard; we can do that ourselves. So can the House of Commons, as can any of the legislatures. We all have, under the Constitution of Canada, our own duty, including the Senate.

The Senate is also singled out in section 47, which provides that the amending procedure can take place without the consent of the Senate in certain circumstances.

So, the Senate was asked by the House of Commons, told by itself, and asked by all of the legislatures to deal with a resolution itself. That is why, it seems to me, we would be abdicating the duties imposed upon us by those representatives of the people of Canada—that is, members of the House of Commons, members of all the legislatures and ourselves—to play our role in constitutional amendments if we decided that, as a part of the process, we would hand over part of our duty to a joint committee that would be dominated by members of the House of Commons.

Of course, the membership of that joint committee would be dominated by the House of Commons. One could not blame them for asking that the committee be dominated by members of the House of Commons. Does any honourable senator think for one minute that the members of the House of Commons, when they invite us to join them on a joint committee, are going to say, "Honourable senators, we know that you have an individual responsibility under the Constitution, the same responsibility as we, the members of the House of Commons, have to make up our own minds about constitutional amendments." That is what the Constitution says. It says that the House of Commons must make up its own mind and must decide on its own resolution, and that the Senate must decide on its own resolution. Does any honourable senator think that, with that background, the members of the House of Commons will send the Senate an invitation to join the members of that house on a joint committee and say, "We don't mind, because of your special and distinct responsibilities, if you have a majority on the committee. We will let the Senate have more members on the committee, because we know senators want to do their own job as required by the Constitution." Of course they will not.

So, a committee dominated by the House of Commons should do the job of the House of Commons and not the job of the Senate. That is why there are definite reasons, in this case particularly, to have a separate committee.

● (1530)

Why a Committee of the Whole? Why not a standing or special committee? Senator Phillips asked rhetorical questions suggesting that it might not operate. How would it operate? How would it decide who is to come? We had no difficulty in connection with the Canada-France fishing agreement. We set up a steering committee. The committee decided what witnesses should be called and got in touch with them. When the witnesses were able to come, they did so, and the procedure was handled quite effectively. I never heard anyone complain that the steering committee did not do its job, or that the

committee was unable, to quote Senator Phillips' words, "to operate." It operated quite smoothly and efficiently.

When will it report? I do not know that the question has any separate significance for a Committee of the Whole. When will it report? It will report as part of the process. And what is that process? The process requires the House of Commons to have a resolution passed; it requires the Senate to have a resolution passed—these are to lead up to the proclamation—and a resolution of the legislatures. For some of the subject matters in the Meech Lake accord, it will require the unanimous support of the legislatures.

We are part of that process. When will we report? We will report, I suppose, when we have completed our investigation—the same as the other institutions involved in this process. Let us take, for example, Nova Scotia. The Nova Scotia Legislature has adjourned for the summer. Therefore, it will assume its role in the process—which is no less important than ours, in fact, it is just as important—in the fall.

Premier Peterson said that he intended to make sure that everyone had a chance to be heard. So one of our partners in this important constitutional process, an important partner—namely, the Province of Ontario—will hold hearings apparently in the fall. Premier Peterson pointed out that the process could take as long as three years, and the idea of its taking that long did not seem either to surprise or alarm him.

Will we take that long? Who knows? We will do our job; and when we have done our job, we will report. I do not see any pressure on us either to hurry or delay the process. We will play our role as given to us in the Constitution.

With reference to sitting in the summer, it is very possible that that could happen. But I do not think there is any reason for us to feel hurried. Senator Phillips said that the House of Commons was going to adjourn on June 30. Assuming that is so, what is the implication—that the House of Commons will finish its resolution by June? If so, that's fine, if it wants to do that, because that is its job. It can do it any way it wants. But that is one reason why it seems to me that we should not be looking at a joint committee, if that is the kind of hurry it has in mind, when many of the other partners in the process, such as the provinces, do not see the situation as requiring that kind of closure.

On the question of co-existence—that is, whether we can have a Committee of the Whole and also have a joint committee—there is one reason why that could happen. I suppose there is no procedural difficulty. In fact, I believe there are examples. I believe it took place in connection with Bill C-60, for example. So there is no procedural reason against it.

But there are two good reasons against it. One is that if we agree to a joint committee, then we admit that our reasons for having a separate committee are not valid. The reason for having a separate Senate committee and not a joint committee, instead of or in addition to, is that we have our job to do, and we should not be looking for help from a joint committee with the House of Commons or with the Legislature of Ontario, or the Legislature of New Brunswick, or a joint committee with