

The Address—Mr. Kaplan

Mr. Kaplan: I can answer yes and as proof, if I may ask and perhaps suggest a possible answer to the Government, they have lost the need, the sense of urgency that the Meech Lake Accord succeed. As I said, they are doing nothing now to try to have it ratified; they have got enough mileage out of it. We want to see our Constitution evolve. And I believe that if the Meech Lake Accord is not ratified, it will be due to their lack of effort, not ours. We supported this agreement.

[English]

Our Leader has sweated blood over Meech Lake, politically. He has held the Party together over it. I have supported it. I participated in the meetings on Meech Lake that were held on this Hill. I listened. I did not do what the Government did, talk about a seamless web. I listened to groups that came from all over the country.

[Translation]

Including Québec, who had suggestions to give us on improving the Accord. I listened and these amendments—these clarifications—were needed. If the Government were really serious, if it really wanted the Meech Lake Accord to be part of the Constitution, it should have taken the amendments, not just ours, but the amendments suggested by Canadians: the Northern Territories were right; the multicultural groups were right; the women also were right with the suggestions that they made. But they do not want what they created, as I said, a sort of mirage. Because it was not clear enough, it did not have enough support from the Canadian people.

[English]

When the Canadian people looked at that constitutional package the next day, they had questions, and the signatories did not have answers. They were not able to tell us what this paragraph meant with clarity. That is why amendments were needed. The seamless web could have been the occasion of great rejoicing in the country.

I do not want denigrate the political importance of Québec, the Québec Government and Québec City, approving of our constitutional arrangements. That is a very important step. But to say, as the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) likes to do, and falsely in my view, that this makes the country whole, that this brings Québec in, this type of rhetoric is false.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We will take two more questioners. The Member for Port Moody—Coquitlam (Mr. Waddell) and then the Member for the Notre-Dame-de-Grâce (Mr. Allmand). Debate.

Mr. Waddell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I agree that it would be more helpful if Members talked about getting Québec to sign the 1981 Constitution, rather than bringing Québec in. There are about 70 MPs supported that. I think that would be a better way of saying it. I have opposed Meech Lake, but I favoured Québec signing the document in 1981.

I should tell Hon. Members that Meech Lake is dead in western Canada. As a matter of fact, it is scary. It is scary because it is the old notion of French and English being accepted anywhere in Canada by a Francophone or Anglophone having rights and being accepted, having equality, no matter which part, as Canadians anywhere in Canada. We are losing that and it is scary. Some of the winds that are coming out of western Canada are quite frankly anti-Québec. Mr. Bourassa has not helped himself, I might say, in some of the speeches he has given, particularly in Manitoba. I deplore that. I think if the Liberal Party wins in Newfoundland next week then Meech Lake will be dead in eastern Canada as well. I think the Government should wake up and understand that is what is happening.

I want to ask the Hon. Member a question, and I will not make it partisan. There is another Liberal view that Trudeau had of Canada that is different than what the Hon. Member has articulated. But he suggested in his speech that the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and the Premier of Québec wanted to have Meech Lake fail, and I wonder if he could explain that because I did not understand what he was getting at.

Mr. Kaplan: I am glad the Hon. Member asked that question because I certainly did not say that. I am glad to be able to make it even clearer that I do not think that they wanted to fail. I think they wanted to succeed. But they are not prepared to do anything to make it succeed because they benefit whether it succeeds or not. That was my point. They benefit politically. The most important thing that I want to deal with, the observation of the Hon. Member, and I think—

[Translation]

—at the same time, I would like to answer the suggestion that I am presenting myself as a spokesman for Québecers. That is not at all the case. I am a Member of Parliament— Now I would also like to say to the Hon. Member for Port Moody—Coquitlam (Mr. Waddell) that I do not want to present myself as a spokesman for the West.