

*Constitution Amendment, 1987*

country in the world to govern. After all, we are a federation, Mr. Speaker. I think that we have at last managed to reunite this confederate family, and I think that is a positive side and that we should persevere in this direction. I am sure we will continue in this vein, and I am thinking of the Francophones outside Quebec, the protection of multicultural groups, and so forth. If we take Quebec's example, as I said earlier, Quebec is the only province that teaches the language of origin in elementary schools. How many provinces in Canada do that? I think we still have a long way to go.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** The period for questions and comments has expired. Resuming debate. The Hon. Member for Prince Albert (Mr. Hovdebo).

• (1210)

[English]

**Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert):** Mr. Speaker, I was a Member of this Parliament between 1981 and 1983 when the Trudeau Government made a successful effort to repatriate the Constitution. The original package would have centralized the power of the federal Government to a greater extent than had existed in the past and would have left the provinces with even more residual powers than before. I was one of many Canadians who objected to such a proposal.

Many of those who were here at the time will know that the final agreement that was signed more closely reflected what some of the provinces had wanted all along. It gave the provinces much more power to make their own economic decisions and determine the destiny of their citizens without having to always appeal to the federal Government for permission to do so.

I give this background for a couple of reasons. First, the federal Government does not corner the market on good economic and social programs. Much of our best legislation came from provincial legislatures, sometimes in spite of opposition from the federal Government.

For example, medicare and hospitalization were the products of the Saskatchewan Legislature. The federal Government did its best to smother those programs but eventually accepted them and emulated them, to make them part of the Canadian fabric today. In recent years Quebec has made many economic decisions which would have required the consent of the federal Government in previous years. I relate these facts because they show the value of lengthy, extensive and involved consultation and negotiation.

The earlier constitutional negotiations were long and involved. Those who were part of the process will recall how the native rights amendment was included, then excluded, then included again. As we negotiated in Parliament and throughout the country, we began to move closer to an acceptable solution until we finally signed an agreement which most provinces found acceptable. However, there was a flaw in the

agreement because unfortunately Quebec decided not to be part of it.

Had we taken more time, we could have arrived at a solution that would have included Quebec. However, as we have seen recently with the midnight accord that was hastily put together, the 1982 agreement was flawed and in need of amendment.

The Meech Lake Accord is the attempt to eliminate that flaw. While I compliment the aim and even the results of the Meech Lake Accord, I must say that I abhor the process. I am disappointed that we have a new document which, although it solves the flaw in the original agreement, is itself flawed.

The Meech Lake Accord is also a hurried document, born out of back rooms at midnight. It is flawed because of that haste, and the lack of consultation and negotiation. It is flawed because it did not have the benefit of the wisdom of Canadians.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and the Premiers did not have enough time to consult, review or speculate on what they were planning. Furthermore, part of Canada was left out of the negotiations at all levels.

While it may be possible to settle a labour dispute by locking the doors and demanding a solution, it is no way to decide the fate of a country. This brings to mind another midnight document that was signed recently, and I hope it is not as flawed as the two I speak of here.

This Accord accomplishes what is needed as far as Quebec is concerned, but it may take years before the mistakes in this document are amended in the way most Canadians want. Those requirements need not have been left out of the Accord and even now can still be included. Why is it necessary to force Canadians to have many more years of constitutional negotiations as a result of an amending mechanism that is cumbersome and incredibly unrealistic? The answer is, of course, that we do not have to go through these negotiations. We do not have to go through several more years of negotiations. All we have to do is accept either the Liberal or the New Democratic amendments, or a combination of the two, and we will have corrected the most obvious shortcomings of the document which we have before us.

• (1220)

I would have no difficulty at all in supporting an Accord which has the kind of amendments which could be adopted by this House. These amendments are straightforward and simple. They would protect the original peoples' access to their rights and recognition to self-government; protect the rights of the territories to become provinces with the same, or somewhat the same, alacrity as other provinces had in joining Confederation in the past; give the territories the right to participate as Canadians in the Senate and the Supreme Court of Canada; and guarantee the Charter of Rights in such a way that no group in Canada is endangered. These amendments would