Quebec's five demands, but we must make certain that in agreeing to those demands we do not detract from other rights that were in the Constitution and were not necessarily discussed by the people who met at Meech Lake and in the Langevin Block last week.

While the principles of the Meech Lake Accord must remain sacrosanct, or else we will scuttle the whole agreement altogether, I see no reason why every detail of the Accord must remain sacrosanct. Let us look at what was done in 1981 and 1982 when we patriated the Canadian Constitution and provided for a Charter of Rights and an amending formula. That whole process took more than one year. It began on October 6, 1980, with a constitutional resolution similar to the one in the Meech Lake Accord tabled in the House. The final vote was taken on December 1, 1981. In the interim, there were three debates in the House and three votes. There was a long debate which terminated on October 4, 1980, at which time a vote took place. Then the resolution was sent to a Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons where it was improved upon. Amendments were made with the agreement of the committee and, if I recall correctly, all Parties agreed to many amendments made by the Special Joint Committee.

Once the committee had finished its work in February 1981, the resolution was returned to the House where it was again debated and another vote was held on April 24, 1981. Then it was referred to the Supreme Court of Canada, there were further discussions and there was a Federal-Provincial Conference on the resolution as it came out of the House of Commons.

At the Federal-Provincial Conference, certain things were changed. When the Ministers signed that Accord in the fall of 1981, they took out provisions Parliament had put in with respect to women and aboriginal rights. Having signed the Accord, it returned to the House of Commons for the third time and Parliament, despite the fact that the Accord had been signed by the provinces, put back in the aboriginal rights and women's rights clauses, though they were not entrenched as well as they had been in the first place.

That is the process that was followed in 1981-82. It entailed much discussion, three debates, three votes and the work of a Special Joint Committee which heard the evidence of groups from all over the country.

The importance of the two matters we are dealing with today is that neither of them are mentioned in the five conditions put forward by Quebec. There is no mention in the proposals put forward by Quebec in May, 1986, of the rights of the Territories to become provinces, or of aboriginal rights. Consequently, I cannot see why there is any objection to dealing with these two matters as proposed.

Who would object? Obviously Quebec did not object. We do not know what went on in the chamber where the Meech Lake Accord was discussed, but it is hard to understand why the unanimity rule was put into the Meech Lake Accord when it was not part of Quebec's proposals. It does not seem to me that it had anything to do with the agreement to Quebec's five proposals. While we want to respect the principles on which Quebec and the other provinces and Governments agreed, we must ensure that these principles agreed upon do not derogate unintentionally from other existing rights.

The first matter raised by the resolution which is to change the provision in the Meech Lake Accord that requires unanimity of all the provinces in order to establish new provinces was never the rule in Canada. When the federal Government carved the Provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan out of the Northwest Territories in 1905, it was done by a statute of the Parliament of Canada with the agreement of the Assembly in the Northwest Territories. The other provinces were not involved and two important provinces were established in that way. The same was true with the admission of Newfoundland in 1949. That was an agreement between the Newfoundland or colonial legislature of the day and the Parliament of Canada. The other provinces were not involved.

In 1981-82 when we patriated the Constitution and put in it the requirement for the creation of new provinces of the agreement of at least seven provinces representing 50 per cent of the population, the two Territories objected at that time because we were departing from the rule we had followed in the past. If they objected to that provision in 1982, they are certainly upset with what is being proposed now. As a matter of fact, they are now saying let us at least stick with the 1982 provision. They see no reason, nor do we, why we must have unanimous consent of all provinces, especially since that was not part of Quebec's conditions for entry into the constitutional agreement.

• (1250)

As was noted by other Hon. Members, the Northwest Territories and Yukon have evolved over the years. I can remember the day when those two Territories, especially the N.W.T, were run by a bunch of mandarins from Ottawa. In due course Assemblies were set up in the N.W.T. and Yukon, much earlier in Yukon, in a move towards a system of responsible Government.

There was also a time when the Governments of those two Territories were almost completely non-Indian or non-Inuit. Now Indians, Métis and Inuit are very much involved in the Governments of those two Territories. As you know, an agreement in principle has been reached to divide the Northwest Territories in two. One would cover the area of Nunavut populated principally by Inuit. The other, in the Western Arctic along the Mackenzie, would have a mixed population of Dene, Métis and non-native people. Those areas are evolving and it would be unfortunate if we stick with this unanimity provision in the Accord for the creation of new provinces.

As far as I can see, that provision is not necessary. Certainly if we agreed to what is in this motion today, that would not be a barrier to the acceptance of the other conditions put forward by Quebec. I want to point out that when the Liberal Party