

They are comparing cabbage to carrots. They would like to revert to the good old times of 1982. We are now in 1987. Pierre Elliott Trudeau is no longer Prime Minister. The Liberal Party of Canada is no longer in government in Ottawa, and the Hon. Member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East has difficulty realizing that. We have been here for almost three years. He has been in opposition for three years, and still he grasped nothing. He is struggling to understand and compare the 1982 constitutional agreement and the 1987 one, when even today he cannot realize he has been in opposition for three years.

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, that is a rather evasive answer, to say the least! I would like to come back to it because there is a difference between the 1982 proposal, which provided that the federal Government would sit at the table with provinces and discuss the matter. There have indeed been four federal-provincial conferences on the matter of aboriginals. I am asking the Hon. Member this clear and non-partisan question: How come—Canadians are listening—the 1982 agreement required the concurrence or support of seven provinces comprising 50 per cent of the Canadian people, either to amend the constitution or to include a new province—if you wanted to admit a new province, it took seven provinces with 50 per cent of the population, when today unanimity is required. All provinces! I am hearing the Northwest Territories and the Yukon say: This is unfair! So, can he give me a reason? Does he know or did his government tell him, did his Prime Minister explain to him in caucus or elsewhere why today they are insisting on unanimity, when it used to be 50 per cent of the people, seven provinces? That is clear!

Mr. Grisé: Mr. Speaker, I realize my time has almost expired, and I will be very brief. I repeat, what is more important? The contents of the 1982 agreement which Quebec did not sign and with which Quebec did not agree, or the 1987 agreement with the five recommendations by Quebec which were accepted, and which Quebec did sign? For the first time since 1927, Canada's 10 provinces are part of the Constitution, Mr. Speaker. That is the important thing. And that is the agreement that was signed on June 3, 1987. The Liberals don't seem to understand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The period provided for questions and comments has now expired. Resuming debate. The Hon. Member for Churchill (Mr. Murphy).

[English]

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, it seems fitting that I have a chance to speak after hearing diatribes from those who are trying to make this a fight between Quebec and the native people in Quebec and the Territories. Obviously no Member of this House believes that is the case. Leaders of all three Parties have spoken in favour of the Accord. They expressed their wish to have Quebec feel it is a full partner in Confederation.

Supply

The purpose of this motion laid down by my Leader, the Hon. Member for Oshawa (Mr. Broadbent), was to go past that point. To recognize that Quebec now accepts the constitutional amendment process and has been brought into the family does not mean constitutional amendments have ended.

Obviously two groups in our society feel they have been left out of the process. Not only that, they were not invited to Meech Lake or the meeting last week in the Prime Minister's Offices. They were left out because the Accord effectively limited their rights. That is a concern and that is why we brought this motion forward. That is why, in introducing the motion, the NDP made it very clear that this is not a matter of confidence in the Government and that all Members have the right under the new rules to vote according to their conscience.

As I said earlier, when the Accord was reached and the final wording accepted, we said we were grateful to have this historic constitutional Accord. We were glad to see Quebec brought into the constitutional family. However, as I also said, there are groups of men and women who feel left out, namely, the northerners and aboriginal people. It is important to realize that the majority of people living in the Northwest Territories are also aboriginal people, so they have been doubly affected by the constitutional sleight of hand so far as natives and northerners are concerned.

It is important to remember that the federal Government should have been standing up for native people. It is important to remember that the federal Government should have been speaking and working for those people because the federal Government has that direct constitutional responsibility. I consider it a failure by the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) not to have adequately dealt with the rights and concerns of those people. It was not the responsibility of the Province of Manitoba and of Premier Pawley to defend aboriginal people, although I know he tried to. It was not the responsibility of any other Premier. Constitutionally, the responsibility lies at the feet of our Prime Minister, and he failed.

I do not criticize him out of hand for that. There was the major task and responsibility of getting Quebec to accept the Meech Lake Accord. However, I believe that if he had worked harder he could have found a formula acceptable to Quebec and the other provinces, and at the same time moved us further along the road to having the concerns of aboriginal and other people in the north met by the Accord.

• (1610)

This motion requires that we move back to the existing rights of the people of Yukon and the Northwest Territories to be able to form their own provinces. My Leader, the Member for Oshawa, stated that, although it is not perfect, the old amending formula of seven provinces with 50 per cent of the population and the federal Government agreeing to a constitutional amendment makes a lot more sense than the proposal which will be before this House as a result of the Meech Lake Accord. The Meech Lake Accord requires the agreement of all ten provinces and the federal Government to form a new