

*Government Orders*

for Premier Wells to put himself in the same position as Premier McKenna is. We make this request because it is not our intent to isolate any province, be it Newfoundland or Quebec. The isolation of a province once in the life of a nation is once too often.

The special committee we propose to be created might wish to consider carefully, proposals put forward by Manitoba and Newfoundland to add a "Canada Clause" to the Constitution which would set out the key elements of our national identity, without deleting any of the elements already entrenched in the 1982 Constitution or to be entrenched by Meech Lake in interpretive clauses. Hon. members will recall that a constitutional preamble had been examined in 1980, but that it was viewed as premature, in the absence of a full consensus on constitutional renewal. Instead, two elements of it—aboriginal rights and the multicultural heritage of Canadians—were included as constitutional interpretive clauses in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but Canada's linguistic duality and Quebec's distinct society were left out.

• (1520)

The resolution that I propose be referred to a special committee is sensitive to the fact that a complex accord was developed and approved by Parliament and eight legislatures, including the National Assembly. It recognizes that if Quebec's fundamental needs are set aside, the whole Accord will collapse. In such circumstances, Canada's constitutional development, including Senate reform, will stop and the issue of Quebec's constitutional isolation will remain.

[*English*]

Premier McKenna, in drawing on the public hearings across Canada and the concerns raised by Canadians, has restricted himself to matters which, in his judgment, might attract a national consensus, with support in all regions.

Where, in his view, it is clear that there is a strong national concern, but that a broadly-based national consensus on an idea has not yet emerged, he has called for a guarantee that the issue be addressed during the next round of constitutional negotiations. It is for that reason that he wishes to place aboriginal constitutional

issues on the permanent agenda of the First Ministers' Conference on the Constitution.

The agenda included in Meech Lake already covers Senate reform. In fact, at the last First Ministers' Conference in November, it was agreed that a First Ministers' Conference on Senate Reform would be held in western Canada in November of this coming year. As Prime Minister of Canada, I have stated that I would table at that conference a comprehensive proposal for an elected Senate on November 1, next in western Canada.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Mulroney:** For its part, the Government of Canada also wants to make progress on aboriginal issues, as set out in the Throne Speech of April 3, 1989.

In this context, I should also remind the House that the government announced in the same Speech from the Throne that it would attach priority to linguistic rights and to ways to strengthen the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as well as Senate reform and aboriginal rights, after proclamation of the Meech Lake Accord.

The government will be looking to the proposed Special Committee of the House of Commons for advice on how and when these matters should be addressed. In short, while the companion resolution is intended to address some immediate constitutional issues in the context of the Meech Lake Accord, it is not intended to resolve all of Canada's outstanding constitutional questions here and now and for all time. This, I think, is one of its strengths.

If the Fathers of Confederation had set as rigorous tests of perfection for Confederation as are now being set by some for Meech Lake, the noble idea of Canada would never have seen the light of day.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Mulroney:** It was only because the Fathers of Confederation recognized their own imperfections, respected each other's differences and acknowledged the fragility of their endeavour that Canada emerged through patient and generous compromise into greatness, and it is only in that spirit that Canada will continue to grow and prosper into the next century as a strong and united nation.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!