

*Government Orders*

The Meech Lake process failed, and the price of that failure has been a high one, with growing alienation in Quebec, in the west, among the aboriginal people of Canada, and indeed among all Canadians.

What lessons has the government learned from the failure of this process? Has it learned that Canadians have to be involved in every step of the process? Has it learned that Parliament has to be involved?

Let us look at the government's two most recent initiatives.

[*Translation*]

First, we have the Citizen's Forum on the Future of Canada, the Spicer Commission. The words "future of Canada" sound wonderful, Mr. Speaker, and if given a broad mandate, the Citizen's forum could be a very worthwhile exercise.

However, we are not really sure what the forum's mandate is. There is a lot of confusion about this, Mr. Speaker, because once again, the Prime Minister made a decision without consulting Parliament, without consulting the leaders of the opposition parties and without consulting members of this House. In fact, as events unfold, it is becoming clear that even members of the commission do not know the forum's mandate.

The Spicer Commission could have had a clear and realistic mandate if there had been consultations and if there had been a commitment. It may be possible to accomplish something, Mr. Speaker, at least I hope so. The New Democratic Party will do everything it can to make this work, and we urge the government to do the same.

[*English*]

Today we have this proposed joint committee of the Senate and the House of Commons on the amending formula to the Constitution. Once again no consultation: no consultation from the Prime Minister with the leaders of the opposition, no involvement of this House in looking at long-term efforts on the Constitution. A discussion paper tabled after the Prime Minister spoke, not shared with the parties before when this motion was being presented, is unacceptable. It is the same old process in the same old way. It must change if we are going to save this country.

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

**Ms. McLaughlin:** Each time since June 23, that an initiative has been put forward by this government, we say to ourselves: "Has the Prime Minister learned anything from past mistakes?" Evidently not, Mr. Speaker, and this is sad. Not in a partisan way; it is sad for Canada. We have to learn from our history. That is what the constitutional debate is all about now. We have to learn from our mistakes. They are clear and before us. But why does it not happen? That is the question Canadians need an answer to.

To have a discussion paper upon which a committee is to be formed not even presented to members of the opposition before the debate is inexcusable. It is arrogant and, as I say, it continues the same old process in the same old way. It is unacceptable. That is exactly why we wanted a debate on this motion today. That is why we simply refuse to rubber stamp this committee.

We also have a strong belief that this committee is too narrowly defined. The issue of the amending formula is an important one. As the member for Yukon, I certainly do not have to be reminded about what a unanimity provision in the amending formula on the future creation of provinces means to my home territory. I understand the importance. My party understands the importance of the amending formula.

The fundamental question here is whether this committee addresses the real issue. We say it does not. What Canada needs to know is not just how we are going to get there but where we are going.

It is also a question of priorities. What about aboriginal issues? Members of the government have said that any progress on constitutional issues regarding aboriginal people will have to wait until the conclusion of the Spicer commission. Aboriginal people are saying—and we are saying it—why do aboriginal people have to wait while for some reason this committee can go ahead and travel across Canada?

Given the broken promises of the government to aboriginal people, given the events of the summer, given that, as we speak, thousands of aboriginal people throughout the country live in poor housing conditions and have no chance of employment, I would suggest that aboriginal Canadians cannot wait. Has the Prime Minister learned nothing from the summer of 1990? If any committee should be travelling across this country now, it should be one on aboriginal affairs trying to deal with