

Supply

same direction in the same way with mutual self-help, then we are going to continue to have fiscal difficulties.

With regard to constituent assemblies, I recognize that they, like referenda and other mechanisms, can have very positive features. I would simply caution people coming forward with any one mechanism thinking that it will solve this problem. I do not believe that separation will resolve the problems that Quebecers feel. I do not believe that there is one single answer out there for complex problems.

There are some positives of constituent assemblies; there are some positives in referenda; there are no doubt some positives in independents. But there are some positives in working together to try and find the best tools to attack the problems and to help each other in a generous, sensible and sensitive kind of way.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, before I get to my main comments, I want to express a few words about the Liberal amendment. I see that my friend from St. Boniface is no longer in the House.

He was talking about our original motion and basically nit-picking over the seven or eight different clauses in it. However, they have a very long subamendment here, and one could do the same thing with their subamendment and express all kinds of misgivings.

For example, point No. 9 of their subamendment says that we should take into account the diversity of the different regions of the country, including the distinct society of Quebec, and should leave to the provinces the responsibility for what is not required by the national interest or in the best interests of citizens.

What does he mean by national interest? And who decides that? I do have a few misgivings about that.

They also talk about national economic union. What is the national economic union? Is it defined so narrowly that it infringes upon provincial rights in that case, such as, for example, non-renewable resources?

• (1630)

I do not think there is any need to be greatly concerned about the precise wording of some of the things you are seeing before the House. The main thing and

what we are saying today in this debate as a party is that we want to have the process well established.

That process should be a very open, accessible and democratic process that is available for all Canadian people, regardless of where those people may live in our country. That is one of the things that we have not seen in the past. Here I make no criticism in any precise way of the Meech Lake process. It was no different substantially from the process back in 1980–81 when the Constitution was patriated and when Pierre Trudeau was the Prime Minister of this country.

At that time, too, we did not have a great, open democratic process. At that time, too, there were a lot of meetings behind closed doors. I remember 1980–81 very well. The parliamentary committee of the House of Commons did not leave this city. It sat in the West Block for about three months and had public hearings.

There were a lot of provinces that never once had public hearings in 1980–81. In fact, the process under Meech was a bit more open and a bit more democratic. In 1987, the parliamentary committee, once again, did not leave this House. We sat in the Railway Committee Room for a month or so in August 1987. There were a few provinces that had public hearings, but not all of them.

We did have some public hearings that were chaired by the member for Sherbrooke. In the spring of last year, we travelled extensively in a very short period of time—too short and a little bit too late—but at least we were going in the right direction. Many provinces did not have public hearings.

One of the premiers who protested so loudly, long and clearly about the lack of democracy in the process last year was the premier of Newfoundland, Clyde Wells. Did Clyde Wells have public hearings in Newfoundland before he rescinded support for the accord? No.

We do not have to take lessons from that particular premier about democracy and the openness of the process. I think we have to put the past behind us and move on from here to try to construct a process that is more open, more democratic and more accessible to all the people of this country.