

Supply

Mr. Speaker, I sincerely believe that thanks to the proposed constitutional amendment signed on June 3, federal-provincial relations in this area of shared jurisdiction will become more harmonious.

Mr. Speaker, in concluding, I would like to say that as a parliamentarian, a Quebecer and the Member for the riding of Chambly, I take great pride in the fact that on April 30, at Meech Lake, and last week in Ottawa, the First Ministers were able to meet the incredible challenge of reconciling the specific needs of Quebec with the interests of the provinces and the common good of the entire country.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions or comments. The Hon. Member for Témiscamingue (Mr. Desjardins).

Mr. Desjardins: First, Mr. Speaker, I should like to commend my colleague from Chambly for his remarks before making a brief comment and asking him a question.

The Opposition motion under consideration reads as follows: That the Government should seek to restore existing rights of Canadians in Yukon and the Northwest Territories to the Constitutional Accord of 1987; and further, to make a commitment to hold a First Ministers' Conference to discuss aboriginal concerns . . .

Unless I am mistaken, and my colleague may correct me in his response, there was a conference of aboriginal people here in Ottawa a few months ago, the fourth one, and the Prime Minister of Canada (Mr. Mulroney) is an unfailing supporter of their rights. It was not him who created a problem during the conference of aboriginal people here a few months ago. Not at all.

Given the motion under consideration today, my question to the Hon. Member for Chambly (Mr. Grisé) is this: Can he tell us how it had become imperative for both Quebec and Canada to do something about getting Quebec into the constitutional fold to repair the blunder of 1982?

Mr. Grisé: Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank my colleague the Hon. Member for Témiscamingue (Mr. Desjardins) for a very relevant question, especially as we know that the Hon. Member for Témiscamingue is deeply concerned with aboriginal matters in the vast Abitibi-Témiscamingue area. As we all know, there is a large population of Quebec native people in that area.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, following the comments by Members of opposition Parties, and again while trying to keep partisan considerations out of this debate, it is quite clear, from what the Members of other Parties have said, that there is a desire to reach a unanimous position and an attempt by opposition Parties to claim the merit of this historical achievement, namely the signing of that constitutional agreement by the ten Premiers and our Prime Minister, incidentally, Mr.

Speaker, an agreement by 10 provincial Premiers representing four different political parties.

Let us think of the extraordinary conciliatory talent which was required to get those political leaders to reach an agreement. That is obvious, as was shown recently by the failure to reach an agreement here in Ottawa at the conference on aboriginal rights, when 25 per cent of the Canadian representation was missing from the negotiating table. How can we as a Parliament reach an agreement, how can we as a Government reach an agreement representing the whole of Canada and establish a unanimous position when 25 per cent of those concerned are missing in the debate, in the negotiation?

Mr. Speaker, we are obviously concerned with aboriginal matters. That is a fact. Indeed, the Prime Minister had organized that meeting of aboriginal people to try and reach a consensus on that matter. Unfortunately, the Province of Quebec was absent from that negotiation.

Why should we therefore try to put the cart before the horse now? In the first place, the Province of Quebec has to become part of that constitutional process, has to have its own fundamental right to speak at that table. When that is done, it will be much easier, Mr. Speaker, to invite aboriginal people as well as the Ministers of the 10 provinces to meet once again and ultimately to achieve an impossible task because our Prime Minister has a record of achieving what seems impossible, and once again I am satisfied that he will succeed eloquently.

● (1600)

[English]

Mr. Allmand: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Hon. Member to look at page 6 of the Accord. I am referring to Section 41(i) which deals with the establishment of new provinces. In the present Constitution, that was dealt with under Section 38. In the Meech Lake Accord, that was moved to Section 41. Amendments under that section require unanimous consent. Nowhere in the five conditions laid down by Quebec is there reference to the entry of new provinces into Confederation. Those five conditions do not even imply that we must have unanimous consent to admit the Territories as provinces in Confederation. Perhaps the Hon. Member could tell the House why the admission of new provinces should come under Section 41 which requires unanimous consent rather than remaining in Section 38 which requires the consent of seven provinces representing 50 per cent of the population?

[Translation]

Mr. Grisé: Mr. Speaker, it is amusing to hear the Hon. Member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East (Mr. Allmand). How awfully hard it is to accept something of benefit to everyone, not only Canadians but also Quebecers!