

Oral Questions

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, the last constitutional proposals that were brought before the House by the Liberal Government needed a great deal of improvement because there was very little consensus for the proposals that were contained in that resolution. As a matter of fact, we as an opposition Party had to fight like the dickens to try to get the matter before a parliamentary committee. There was very little consensus for that particular proposal.

Again, I repeat, we are committed to this proposal. I am not sure what changes the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition is suggesting. If he is suggesting some changes, perhaps he would like to elaborate on those changes on the floor of the House. He will have an opportunity to come before the appropriate mechanism, a parliamentary committee. He and his colleagues will certainly have an opportunity to express their points of view.

I hope that at a very early date I will be in a position to lay out a number of options to the House Leaders opposite so that we can consider how we might best proceed. I am in the process of developing those options now. I hope that in the next few days I will be able to do that, and perhaps we can consider some of the points that the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition has brought forward.

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES AND YUKON—ATTAINMENT OF PROVINCEHOOD

Mr. Keith Penner (Cochrane—Superior): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. It was during the election campaign of 1958 that the Right Hon. John G. Diefenbaker said: "I see a new Canada—a Canada of the north."

I wish to ask the Deputy Prime Minister why this Government has abandoned Canada's north in the 1987 Constitutional Accord. Why was it that in all the negotiations leading up to this Accord the Northwest Territories and Yukon were cast aside and ignored? Why has the Government made it next to impossible for provincehood ever to be attained in Canada's North?

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, in response to the Hon. Member's question, I think I should make it quite clear that the contentions that he has put forward are, unfortunately, untrue.

The reality of the matter is that we now have an opportunity as a new and united Canada to come forward in a spirit of co-operation which, unfortunately, has not existed in the country for many, many years, in order to develop the full potential of a very important part of our country.

This Party has taken a leadership role in terms of the concept of devolution so that the northern territories will in fact have control over their own destiny. I think our record is exemplary in this connection. I say to the Hon. Member that

the process has done nothing but enhance our ability to meet that objective.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1425)

PROVISION REQUIRING UNANIMOUS APPROVAL BY PROVINCES

Mr. Keith Penner (Cochrane—Superior): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Minister of Justice who has just replied. In the light of what he has said, would he be willing to accept an amendment to the Accord which would remove the requirement of unanimity for the creation of new provinces? Second, is he willing to allow the territorial Governments of the Northwest Territories and Yukon to submit their lists for a Senate appointment when a vacancy occurs north of 60°?

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, one of the aspects of the Accord which I think is progressive, is in the Canadian tradition, and one which would give the kind of assurance to all parts of our country that regional considerations are going to be considered, is the fact that we have, for the first time in the history of this country, constitutionalized the constitutional process between the various provinces and the federal Government. There will be ample opportunity on an annual basis to consider the various proposals brought forward for progressive change in our country and the Constitution.

The inclusion of Quebec in the Constitution has given a dimension to our country which has been lacking over the past years. I would suggest to the Hon. Member, Members of the House and to the country, generally, it has given hope for our northern territories that in the course of the evolution of the Constitution over the next years, they will in fact reach their proper status in our country.

ABORIGINAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. I think yesterday was a good day for Quebec and for Canada. In light of the lack of success of the recent First Ministers' Conference relating to aboriginal self-government, would the Deputy Prime Minister consider supporting the addition of another item to the two points which are there now in relation to the Senate and to fisheries matters at the First Ministers' Conference for next year, that being aboriginal title and rights and self-government? Now that Quebec is a full participant, I think we are much more likely to see success coming out of such a First Ministers' Conference.

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, if I may be permitted to respond to that question, I agree with the conclusion of the Hon. Member that, with the inclusion of Quebec, the chances with respect to agreement on aboriginal matters is indeed