

the Meech Lake Accord some agreements or some provisions could be recommended that might possibly salvage the accord.

As the hon. member will recall, on June 9, 1990, an agreement was reached by First Ministers. Much of the work of the Charest commission in which the hon. member participated was part of the environment in which that agreement was reached and, as they say, the rest is history. I do not see anything to be valued or anything to be gained by rehashing that.

I think it is precisely because we have lived through that time—and that parliamentary committee's activity was part of a process of trying to bring about constitutional change—that we can see the problems in the process. I think there is no group of people who are more profoundly aware of the difficulties we faced in that process than members of Parliament and, because the Parliament of Canada is one of the chief actors in the current amending formula, I think leadership must come from the Parliament of Canada, which is both Houses of the federal government.

The hon. member's experience and that of many other people in that House would be enormously valuable. There is no guarantee that recommendations made by a joint committee will ultimately find their way into the Constitution. We do not have in the Parliament of Canada the unilateral right to change the Constitution. But before we can even begin to address that question, the question of process has to be addressed. So the recommendation of the committee is obviously going to be terribly important. What will happen to it after that is not solely within the hands of the House, but I can give the hon. member my assurance that I personally am deeply committed to seeing this process succeed, and I am very confident that the results of that committee's deliberation will be of inestimable value. I cannot think of a better process, whether it is with private consultations, or whatever. Notwithstanding that the people in justice like to arrogate the law unto themselves, I cannot think of a better forum in which to come up with recommendations that are both legally sound and sensitive to the human and political realities of Canada. I think the hon. member has an enormous amount to contribute, and I can give him my commitment that I will be most interested, and I believe the government will be very interested and will make as much use of the results of the committee as it is possible to do.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu): Mr. Speaker, after having heard the minister's speech, I wonder if she sincerely believes that Quebecers will fall for such a diversion. We had the Charest Committee which watered down the Meech Lake Accord. The five requests were minimal, and yet they were rejected by English Canada. The Charest Committee was set up, and its report was shelved. The Spicer Commission was set up, and now another committee is being set up.

Are we taken for fools or what? Only fools would believe that striking a committee will do little more than buy time. Will the Quebecers in this government lend themselves to that musical chairs game for the sake of visibility, to be seen once in a while on television and defend the interests of Quebecers in committees that will end up concluding just the opposite of what the Bélanger-Campeau Commission concluded? How can a central government be expected to decide by way of referendum whether a province is to remain or not a part of Canada? Come now! If Newfoundland decided to leave, do you think that holding a referendum in the rest of Canada would prevent Newfoundland from leaving? Would a referendum held across Canada cancel out one held in Quebec? Be serious!

There are two founding nations in this country, one of which is pondering over its membership in this great big Canadian family. This kind of committee will travel across Canada, lull people, buy time and create a diversion. Would it not be wiser to allow the province of Quebec and its people to calmly think about its future without all these committees? Such committees are only good to buy time, in the hope of seeing the Quebecers, the francophone people of Quebec, be put to sleep again so that they will behave like the sheep they once were and swallow false promises like the ones made to them about the repatriation of the Constitution by all provincial premiers of Canada and Prime Minister Trudeau at the time of the referendum.

We had been promised that the Constitution would be repatriated. In the end, with such a committee, the Constitution was repatriated omitting one of the founding nations, that is to say Quebec. And we are to believe that the new committee will provide the answer to the