

*Constitution Acts***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS--MOTIONS**

[English]

CONSTITUTION ACTS 1867-1982**SUGGESTED INCLUSION OF THE YUKON AND NORTHWEST TERRITORIES GOVERNMENTS IN CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCES****Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon)** moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should introduce a measure to amend the Constitution Acts 1867 to 1982 to include the leaders of the governments of the Yukon Territory and the Northwest Territories among the First Ministers participating in all constitutional conferences; and

That this House urge the Senate and the Legislative Assemblies of all provinces to pass similar resolutions.

She said: Mr. Speaker, this is a simple motion that should not really be open to much debate. It states that the duly elected government leaders of the Yukon Territory and Northwest Territories should be part of constitutional talks at First Ministers conferences. This would seem quite logical to ordinary Canadians. I suggest that they would even be surprised that we had to go this route of a Private Members' Motion to petition the House to consider this issue.

The Meech Lake Accord which was passed by this House has effectively brought Québec into the Constitution. Alas, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories have effectively been cut out of potential future provincehood.

Both territories have quasi provincial type legislatures where its members and Governments have responsibility for provincial items such as health, social services and justice. In addition, we have government leaders who are analogous to a premier of a province. We have elections just like all other Canadians, and elect these leaders on the assumption that they will represent the people of the territory on federal matters as well as territorial matters.

While simple justice and fairness would dictate that the provisions in my motion would simply be accepted as indisputable facts, the Meech Lake Accord has had some interesting implications.

Let me return to the Constitution, 1982, in which Section 37 sets the principle for what did not take place in the current round of constitutional amendments. Section 37.1(1) states:

In addition to the conference convened in March 1983, at least two constitutional conferences composed of the Prime Minister of Canada and the first ministers of the provinces shall be convened . . .

It goes on to give the dates on which that shall be done. Section 37.1(3) states:

The Prime Minister of Canada shall invite elected representatives of the governments of the Yukon Territory and the Northwest Territories to participate in the discussions on any item on the agenda of a conference convened under subsection (1) that, in the opinion of the Prime Minister, directly affects the Yukon Territory and the Northwest Territories.

Is it being suggested that the Constitution of Canada, the creation of potential provinces in the North, the appointment

of Supreme Court judges, the appointment of Senators, the question of whether provinces are allowed to extend their boundaries northward, the question of aboriginal rights, are not all matters that directly affect the people who live in those territories? Apparently that has been done.

In a 1983 meeting of the Premiers and the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) there was a constitutional accord on aboriginal rights specifically. The territories were invited to participate in those talks dealing with aboriginal rights. At the same time, the Prime Minister and the Premiers signed a letter stating that they would deal at a later meeting with the outstanding issues of the creation of provinces and boundary extension. That has never really been done except in 1987 to reaffirm that new provinces could only be created by the unanimous consent of all other provinces. British Columbia, should it wish, could simply extend its boundary into the Yukon. B.C. does not have to ask the Yukon, B.C. could just extend its boundary as long as all its other friends in the provinces agree.

• (1440)

Needless to say, the disenfranchisement of 75,000 Canadians north of the 60th parallel in the Yukon Territory and the Northwest Territories did not meet with a lot of pleasure from the citizens. We have already assumed that we do not leave our rights at the 60th parallel.

During the Meech Lake Accord discussions the leaders of the Yukon and the Northwest Territories were not only not consulted and had no voice but when they came to Ottawa and decided to attempt to make some representation to the Government they were simply told to go home and that the Prime Minister would look after their interests. The interests that have been looked after are the issues I listed a few moments ago.

People in the North do not fundamentally have the same rights as other Canadians. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I have spoken to many groups both here in southern Canada and in the North. One principle people immediately grasp is that Canadians are basically fair people and they understand when people are not being treated fairly. They ask, "Why wouldn't you have a voice? How could it happen that the residents of Alberta, British Columbia or whatever province should be able to say, "We are going to move the borders up. Thank you, Yukoners, take it or leave it' ".

The Prime Minister, to give him his due, as well as the Leaders of the other Parties have worked very hard for the reconciliation of this country by bringing Québec formally into the Constitution. It is an extremely important and historic part of this country. The Prime Minister and the other Party Leaders deserve great credit for that. However, "Why", northerners ask, "in reconciling these outstanding historical issues in the country did we have to disenfranchise northerners? Are we really a northern country? Do we take it seriously?"