

Globe

Nov 19, 1990

Globe NOV 19/1990  
**Lesson from Meech**

The article Ontario Considering Counterpart To Quebec Political Commission (Nov. 7) suggested the province is considering appointment of its own constitutional commission. If that is the case I trust the new Premier will be more faithful to the lessons of Meech Lake than was the Prime Minister in naming the Citizens' Forum on Canada's Future.

The message of Meech Lake is not merely "to take the politics out of the constitution" but rather to lessen the role of first ministers in the constitutional amendment process. The constitution belongs to the people, but they are represented by all the elected legislators, not just first ministers.

The initial item of business for the new Ontario Legislature will be election of a Speaker. However, in a break with tradition, this will be by secret ballot following rules adopted by the previous legislature. This procedure has been used twice in Ottawa and has proved successful. It gives substance to the theory that a Speaker is the formal head of the legislature and derives authority from all members, not just the government side.

We should use the obvious legitimacy embodied in such an officer to add credibility and legitimacy to our constitutional amendment process. For example, the Prime Minister would have been much wiser if he had submitted a list of names to the Speaker of the House and invited the opposition party leaders to do the same, leaving the final choice of the Citizens' Forum up to the only person in Canada elected by all the elected representatives. That would have been the start of legitimacy. That would have indicated the Meech Lake accord did not die in vain.

The problem with Meech Lake was process pure and simple. Ontario Premier Bob Rae will soon find himself with a Speaker elected by all members of the Legislature. By finding a role for the Speaker in his (or her) capacity as representative of all members the Premier will send out the correct signal that no amount of public debate can

resolve our constitutional difficulties until a better method is elaborated for constitutional amendment. The best hope for this process is to be found by embracing (not fleeing) politics, starting with the elected members of the assembly and their Speaker.

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