

*Government Orders*

Despite that, despite the fact that I sometimes worry about the future of this country, I think that within Canada and all regions of this country there is a great feeling that we must keep this country together. There is a great feeling that we must find ways of reforming our institutions, making this institution more meaningful, binding our country together and expressing that tolerance and that generosity to keep the country together as we move on to the 21st century.

I am optimistic about the future of Canada. I think this country is going to work. The gesture of today is a very concrete step in making this country better not only for the Acadian minority, not only for New Brunswick, but for all Canadians regardless of where we may live.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Before moving on I should officially put to the House the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition a bit earlier. Mr. Chrétien, seconded by Mr. Young (Acadie—Bathurst), moved:

That the question be now put.

[Translation]

**Mr. Douglas Young (Acadie—Bathurst):** Madam Speaker, it is with great emotion and pride that I participate in this historic debate on a motion authorizing an amendment to the Constitution Act of 1982 in order to enshrine: (1) that the English linguistic community and the French linguistic community in New Brunswick have equality of status and equal rights and privileges, including the right to distinct educational institutions and such distinct cultural institutions as are necessary for the preservation and promotion of those communities; (2) that the role of the legislature and government of New Brunswick to preserve and promote the status, rights and privileges referred to above is affirmed.

The two official language communities of New Brunswick have shown great understanding and generosity, and it is this spirit of liberality and magnanimity that allows us today to enshrine in our Constitution this principle of equality which is so important for our people's harmonious development.

For the Acadian community in my province, the recognition of these rights is the result of a very long struggle. A century ago, the Acadian people gave themselves a few emblems to rally around such as a flag, an

anthem and a national day. From these symbolic actions emerged a defensive nationalism, whose first priority is to preserve their language, culture and religion. Eventually they established ways to develop their economy, such as the Acadian co-operative movement, to ensure that the survivors of Grand-Pré would continue to survive.

Rapid progress was made when Louis Robichaud was elected as the first Acadian premier of New Brunswick in 1960. The University of Moncton was founded in 1963 and the Official Languages Act was proclaimed in 1969.

The equal opportunities program launched by Mr. Robichaud in the sixties has been essential to Acadians achieving recognition of the equal status they now enjoy with their English speaking neighbours.

Two figures who followed in the footsteps of Mr. Robichaud also deserve our recognition and gratitude, and I am referring to the late Richard Hatfield, who became premier in 1970, and the present premier, the Hon. Frank McKenna, who on Friday, December 4, led the legislature of my province in passing a resolution that recognizes the equal status of both official language communities of New Brunswick.

I want to thank my colleagues in the New Brunswick legislature whose co-operation made it possible for us to take part in this important event in Acadian history and in the history of New Brunswick and Canada. The support shown for Premier McKenna's resolution by the leader of the Conservative Party of New Brunswick, Dennis Cochrane, and by the members of his caucus, and the support of the leader of the New Democratic Party, Ms. Elizabeth Weir, is tangible proof that friendship and understanding between two official language communities are possible in this country.

I want to thank the Government of Canada, led by Prime Minister and seconded by the hon. member for Madawaska—Victoria and Minister of Employment and Immigration for what they did today.

It is a great privilege to witness this historic day with the Leader of the Opposition who sponsored the enshrinement in the Constitution of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and who represents a large number of Acadians as the member for Beauséjour in my province. A coincidence, I would say, that proves that luck is always on the side of those who persevere.