

charismatic event in Saint-Hyacinthe, and finally understanding that Quebec had legitimate yearnings and that the necessary efforts had to be made to have them join the Canadian federation. Then Mr. Joyal and the whole group finally woke up and opened their arms to Quebec and said to the federal Government: "Those minimum conditions must be met." For our part anyway, we wondered for a long time what had happened, if there had been a special event or some kind of miracle in Saint-Hyacinthe during that weekend. We have to admit that fundamentally after short reflection, we thought there was some lack of credibility, an incredible about-turn in such a short time. Actually, are we going to complain today? I do not think so. At that time anyhow, we were not going to complain but we said: "They have finally understood, it took them 20 years, but they have finally understood and they will try to have Quebec join the Canadian federation so that the country may begin to build together instead of tearing one another to pieces and trying to reign by dividing. Afterwards as is often the case, the New Democratic Party held its own general convention in Montreal and Mr. Howard Pawley who is the Manitoba Premier was there. As a parody, they had square dances throughout the weekend and discovered they had deep roots in Quebec. They also said to themselves: "We have to be open to Quebec." It was a turn-about just as dramatic as that of the federal Liberal Party except that in their case, they were not in government but in the opposition. They also suddenly discovered the legitimate yearnings of Quebec 20 years after sharing the views of the federal Liberal Party.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we were not going to complain about that as a Party, as a Government. After all we were the ones in 1984 who made that commitment, not them—not Mr. Broadbent, nor Mr. Turner because he had done the opposite in 1984. At that point in their history, they came to join us, they acknowledged, they told us: You were right in 1984, you were right in stating what you stated, Canadian voters recognized it, and because we are reasonable people, we also will recognize the wisdom of Canadian voters.

An Hon. Member: Brian Mulroney's leadership!

Mr. Charest: Yes, Mr. Mulroney's leadership actually which made sure we got there at that point. So the Hon. Member for Montreal—Sainte-Marie (Mr. Malépart) and everyone joined the group. Interestingly, as I am trying to remember, the Hon. Member for Saint-Henri—Westmount (Mr. Johnston) had said nothing up to that point. Quite intriguing anyway. They said nothing then. It was perfect solidarity, plain love, everyone was agreeing. Perhaps they were hoping. You will see that one of these days both groups will play tricks on each other, and they will set out on great missions.

Finally, there is another event which we must recall, that is the meeting of the provincial Premiers in August 1986—if I am not mistaken because I do not have the exact dates—the meeting in Edmonton, Alberta, where I recall the formula for the Senate and Senate representation were discussed. That was

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a turning point in the negotiations and the evolution of the constitutional matter for the following reason: First, Mr. Bourassa and the Prime Minister had agreed on the following. They had agreed that they should contact provincial Premiers and settle a couple of things. First, they would tell them: Look, the next round of negotiations should concentrate on the following matter, the following theme: Quebec's acceptance of the Constitution. This is what the Prime Minister and Mr. Bourassa at the time told the provincial Premiers. They told them: Look, let us try to concentrate on that matter for the time being, otherwise we will never reach any agreement. Never!

Also, the Quebec Premier, who was playing an important game, told them this: Here are the five conditions which we propose for adhering to the Canadian Constitution. At this Conference of the provincial Premiers which was held in Edmonton, the provincial Premiers found that they could live with these five conditions. In other words, Mr. Speaker, on that historical date which, unfortunately, very few people appreciate, the provincial Premiers accepted for the first time to say: None of these conditions is so offensive to us that we could not, as provincial Premiers, negotiate on the basis of these five conditions. Well, I say: Bravo! That was a major step which was taken thanks to the efforts made by the Prime Minister of Canada and Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party (Mr. Mulroney) and those of Mr. Bourassa at the time.

There were then the historical Meech Lake meetings. I do not intend to deal at length with them, nor with the final meeting in the Langevin Block. Nevertheless, I should like to pause a few seconds to make an essential comment which I can summarize this way: As both a Quebecer and Canadian, I was quite surprised to hear the comments made by those who said: Constitutional negotiations should not be carried out with only the provincial Premiers and the Prime Minister of Canada holed up in one room for eight or ten hours, until they reach an agreement. That is not the way it should be done. It should be done in the open, I do not know where. Perhaps these people felt that it should have taken place in a shopping center! We feel it should not have been done that way. Let us not expose ourselves to ridicule, Mr. Speaker. You know, Quebec has seen about sixty years of constitutional negotiations. What happened during the talks at Meech Lake and here across the street in the Langevin Building is certainly no big secret. I do not think any earth-shaking discoveries were made during those talks. After sixty years I think it was only normal to be able to sit down together for a few hours and finally reach an agreement.

I do not intend to waste much time refuting the arguments of those people, but I merely want to say their line of reasoning is ridiculous, and that personally, I think it is all rather ridiculous and redundant.

The result of the two meetings was a unanimous accord signed by the ten provincial First Ministers and the Prime Minister of Canada. That they were able to do so unanimously