

I have followed the career of the late Prime Minister Errol Barrow with interest. I met him a good many years ago. I have admired his leadership and his courage—his intellectual as well as physical courage. He was a fine military man and an outstanding statesman who, in the old scriptural expression, did not follow every wind of doctrine. He was a man of independence. As one who did not belong to the Commonwealth Caribbean, I admired always his belief in the hope that a stronger, more closely integrated Commonwealth Caribbean could and should be developed. I admired, too, the simplicity with which he chose to live, although he had walked with kings and had attained a very high position.

I suppose that some of us lay a special claim to Mr. Barrow because, as part of his military career as a distinguished airman, he spent a good deal of time in Prince Edward Island on the Summerside base, one known very well to my colleague, Senator Orville Phillips. We in Prince Edward Island feel that we have experienced a special loss in the departure of this distinguished statesman and broadminded internationalist. He was a fine administrator, and I think that Senator Cools has done the right and perceptive thing in placing him among a great quartet of Barbadian statesmen. I, on behalf of my party, join with her in extending our condolences to his family, to his sister, the distinguished Ambassador to the United Nations, and to all of those from Barbados who loved and admired him, especially my friend—and I am proud to call him my friend—the distinguished High Commissioner from Barbados to Canada, the Honourable Peter Morgan.

[Translation]

THE CONSTITUTION

1987 CONSTITUTIONAL ACCORD TABLED

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government and Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations): Honourable senators, today, the Prime Minister of Canada tables in the House of Commons the text of the Accord approved early this morning by all First Ministers at their meeting on the Constitution. It is with great satisfaction and a tremendous sense of pride that I table this document before this chamber. Today, our country has again become an indivisible entity.

[English]

The principles embodied in the Meech Lake agreement have been transformed into constitutional language acceptable to all First Ministers. I am confident that it will also receive the firm and generous endorsement of Canadians.

[Translation]

As I did previously in this chamber, on May 5, I would like to stress the leadership shown by the Prime Minister in getting across his vision of Canada, as well as the statemanship and conviction of the provincial premiers.

All the First Ministers are to be commended for their hard work and determination. Despite the obstacles they encountered on their way, they persevered and achieved unanimity on an agreement which, I am convinced, will stand up to the test of time.

Today we have come to the end of a long and often arduous quest, which has dominated a large part of Canada's history in recent years. Today we welcome Quebec as a full partner in Confederation. Quebec's painful constitutional isolation is now a thing of the past.

We have also laid the foundations for our future together as a nation and as a people.

We have every reason to celebrate.

The long and complex negotiating process which brought the First Ministers to Meech Lake on April 30 this year and which was successfully concluded in Ottawa today, will have been instrumental in renewing and reinforcing the partnership between the federal government and the provinces.

The First Ministers met the challenge of Meech Lake and did an excellent job. We in this chamber will also be asked to do our share in the weeks to come.

Quebec now has the assurance that its legitimate aspirations are recognized and protected in the Constitution, as are those of Canada's other regions. Furthermore, both the process and the outcome of these talks have always accurately reflected the responsibilities and obligations of a national government.

[English]

Ours is a federal state in which the national government speaks firmly, but does not seek to submerge the voices of the provinces. The Government of Canada remains the guardian of the national interest, but not a taskmaster of uniformity. Our Confederation is a partnership whose members have worked and will continue to work together in a spirit of common cause.

Honourable senators, this is a time for healing. This Accord is a forceful declaration of nation-building. It acknowledges our past and shows confidence in our future. It represents the boldness of our political leadership, the diversity of our country, and the maturity of our people.

The June 3 Accord represents a touchstone in the life of a still young federation, out of which will grow a more tolerant, a more open and a more confident nation.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

● (1410)

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, the fact that what has been presented to us today is a document for constitutional change signed by the Prime Minister of Canada and all the premiers representing their provinces—and I underline "all," because it includes Quebec—is a reason for celebration. I congratulate all the participants for the evident energy and devotion they have put into bringing about a document signed by all the provinces and by Canada. Certainly, I congratulate the Leader of the Government in the Senate, the Honourable Lowell Murray, who played a large role in bringing about this event. He is entitled to share in the celebration of the fact that Quebec has signed the document.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!