

Minority groups and Canadians concerned with protection of equality rights have deep concerns that their rights may be overridden in the present Constitution. Experience has shown that they are valid concerns and fears, that there is a great risk with section 33 still in our Constitution.

We appeal to the parliamentary committee on the Constitution and to the government decision-makers, both provincial and federal, to amend or repeal section 33 so that this can never happen.

In conclusion, I would just like to say that, like most Canadians, we hope that constitutional renewal will be completed expeditiously with recognition of the distinctiveness of Quebec and aboriginal Canadians and the inclusion and protection of the rights of all Canadians in a multicultural Canada.

I say once again that I would like to table the report that I referred to earlier in my remarks so that it will be available to the constitution committee.

**Mr. Dennis Mills (Broadview—Greenwood):** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to have an opportunity to speak here this evening on behalf of my constituents and try to represent the views that they have expressed to me in regard to their feelings toward the current constitutional debate that is going on our country.

I would like to begin by quoting Edward Blake some half a dozen years after the beginning of Confederation when he said: "The future of Canada depends very largely upon the cultivation of a national spirit. We must find some common ground on which to unite, some common aspiration to be shared and I think it can be found alone in the cultivation of that national spirit to which I have referred".

That has been the driving guideline by which most of my constituents have approached their national government. My constituents believe that it is absolutely essential for a national spirit to have a strong national government. We cannot galvanize the will of this country unless the national government is in a position to manage national programs. It is, after all, from national programs, whether they be health care, educational standards, economic standards, environmental standards, and only when we have the approach of national standards that we can create this spirit.

### *The Constitution*

My constituents are telling to me that right now there is too much decentralization going on in this country, that there is too much of the national fabric being dismantled. They are concerned that in this process of Constitution, in the effort of the national government to try and accommodate the various requirements or the various demands of the provinces, that spirit might be weakened to the point where the will to want to hold it together will no longer be there in some regions of our country.

On behalf of my constituents, we want to reaffirm the position that we took in 1984. We were a community that had some concerns about the Meech Lake Accord. We had a very strong campaign on amendments to Meech Lake and we were concerned about Meech Lake for two very specific reasons. First, we were concerned about minority rights. To be specific, the distinct society clause was a very controversial issue in the last campaign that I participated in and to this day. Quite frankly the mood has not changed that much.

If distinct society means that no culture is less than or greater than another culture, my constituents have no problem with the distinct society clause, but if distinct society means that there is a preferential status given to a particular group then my constituents were opposed in 1984 and they are opposed today.

• (2040 )

That is essentially the clear message that I am getting on that very controversial clause. It would be fundamental to my constituents that a clarification on what distinct society means be laid out clearly in the current constitutional debate.

There is another area that we talked about during 1984 and we continue to talk about. You must remember in an urban centre like downtown Toronto we have people coming from all over the nation. For example, I have over 5,000 people in my riding from the province of Newfoundland. The people in my community are concerned about those regions that do not have the same resources as Ontario or even Quebec. They want a strong national government so that on economic matters the strong can help look after those regions that need help. They need help in terms of quality of life, the standard of life, resources to universities, resources for making sure that environmental standards and programs can be maintained.