

If I had more than 20 minutes, I would be able to demonstrate to you, and convince those who listen with an open mind, that this radical change of course contemplated by the constitutional Accord could weaken if not destroy the Canadian Federation. We are embarking upon a dangerous course towards decentralization, a poorly thought-out constitutional dead-end caused by the requirement that the provinces must be unanimous on major constitutional amendments. This is a step backward from the vision of a bilingual and multicultural Canada and a return to what some people call the two-nation concept, one anglophone and the other francophone. To those who say: "Donald, if you vote against the Accord, you are voting against Quebec", I say: To vote for the Accord is to vote against Canada.

I am for a confident and strong Quebec, within a strong Federation.

If I wanted to destroy the Canadian federation, if I wanted to suppress the rights of language minorities, and if I wanted to create a loosely constructed federation, a kind of alliance among 10 provinces, with a distinct society in Quebec, endowed with powers that would not be available to the other provinces, if I wanted to wipe out the possibility of creating jointly-financed national programs like health insurance, if I wanted to do all that, Madam Speaker, I would vote for the Constitutional Accord.

I will therefore vote against it.

Madam Speaker, I am being accused of wanting to maintain the dream of a bilingual country, a dream that does not reflect the Canadian reality that Quebec is a francophone island in an anglophone country.

I am being accused of refusing to accept a fact of life, namely that Quebec is a distinct society within the Canadian federation and that the Quebec National Assembly and the Quebec Government must be able to protect and promote that distinct identity, as described in the Constitutional Accord. Today, Madam Speaker, I therefore wish to concentrate on this particular aspect, namely, Quebec as a distinct society.

First of all, Madam Speaker, to explain my philosophy I must comment briefly on my own origins. I am not originally from Quebec. I was raised on a small farm in the Ottawa Valley, just 12 miles from Parliament Hill. But for more than 40 years I lived in the Province of Quebec, first in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu and later in Montreal. My father retired in Vancouver, and my wife comes from Nova Scotia.

And so, Madam Speaker, I feel at home everywhere in Canada but particularly in Quebec where I have chosen to reside. Madam Speaker, I am sorry I did not learn to speak French before my adult years, and that explains my strong accent. I mention these points of personal history simply to tell you that I chose to make Montreal my home. Like many other anglophones in the province—I believe the great majority—we not only accept the promotion of French in "la belle province", but we take an active part in the process. Our children speak French, they work in French and, far from being hostile to the French fact we are proud of it! We are in the Province of

### *Constitution Amendment, 1987*

Quebec not despite the French fact but because of the French fact. Although there was an exodus of anglophones after the election of the *Parti québécois*, those who remained chose the Quebec option and have no intention of abandoning their province.

Madam Speaker, my problem with the Constitutional Accord lies far beyond Quebec linguistic issues. But I emphasize that the protection of minority rights remains a basic point in this debate, whether we are talking about the 800,000 people who speak English in Quebec and can be found in every socio-economic stratum of society, about the rights of francophones outside Quebec, about women, about native people, about Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Indians, all visible minorities, just to name a few. In my judgment, given the legal scope of the distinct society clause, there is no doubt that minority rights could be prejudiced under the proposed agreement.

However, Madam Speaker, let us get back for a moment to the dream of a bilingual country from Newfoundland to British Columbia.

As I see it, the Accord will indeed put an end to this dream, this dream about a bilingual country where Canadians who speak French or English or are bilingual will be entitled to public services in the language of their choice throughout Canada. A country where education would be available in either French or English in every region. Unfortunately, and there is no doubt on this point, in both its tone and direction the Accord leads toward a French-speaking Quebec in an English-speaking country. Admittedly, it is true that we have not yet fully realized the bilingual Canada of our dreams, but instead of applauding the progress already made and of continuing in the same vein, the Government is telling us that we should entrench in the Constitution what it considers to be the Canadian reality. For my part, I say that you should never enter public life if you are satisfied with reality, satisfied with the *status quo*.

Did Sir John A. Macdonald accept the Canadian *status quo* of his time? Or rather, did he dream of a strong and united federal country—a dream which guided his policies? Was the building of a railway across this beautiful country, which is the subject of the book *The National Dream* by Pierre Berton, not inspired by this dream? Was the vision of Laurier, who said that the 20th century belonged to Canada, not a dream also? Even if it is impossible to make our dreams come true, we must still make sure that our society progresses toward those dreams. As for me, Madam Speaker, I am convinced that the dream of Henri Bourassa, Laurier, St-Laurent, Pearson, and more recently Trudeau, namely the dream of the bilingual Canada which I have described, is a dream which can come true. Indeed, it is essential for this dream to come true if we want to have a strong and united Canada which can compete with the rest of the world. As far as this dream is concerned, Madam Speaker, the Accord represents a disappointing failure.