

Our Prime Minister sought to bind up the wounds left by Mr. Trudeau. He sought to bring Quebec back into the constitutional family, to spike the guns of the separatists, to achieve constitutional harmony after a generation of dangerous and divisive conflict. Clyde Wells doesn't understand or, perhaps, he doesn't care.

Here's what he said about the threat of separatism (Evening Telegram, October 11):

"What I don't know and I must frankly admit that I can't say with any degree of certainty is whether (separation) is likely to be exacerbated if Meech Lake is not accepted by the rest of Canada or if it is not likely to be affected one way or the other."

This is a cop-out by Mr. Wells. He should own up that he is placing at grave risk the unity of our country.

But Mr. Wells has an answer. He is acting on principle, he says. He is protecting the interests of the people who elected him, he says. He challenges the Meech Lake Accord, he says, because it will prevent Senate reform, because it will split the country and because it will condemn Newfoundland to be a have-not province forever. Mr. Wells' challenges to the Meech Lake Accord are just plain wrong.

Mr. Wells says he wants Senate reform. Without the Meech Lake Accord there will be virtually no chance for Senate reform, because there will be virtually no chance for constitutional reform. He will have destroyed it, perhaps for another generation.

Mr. Wells says that recognizing Quebec's role to preserve and promote its distinct society will destroy national unity. This is not rational. Who supports the Meech Lake Accord ... the federalists in Quebec. Who wants to see it die ... the separatists.

Recognizing Quebec as a distinct society is only recognizing the reality that began with French settlement over 380 years ago. It is a reality that deserves to be recognized if we are to hope for a united Canada in the future. And recognizing that reality does not detract one iota from Newfoundland's or Nova Scotia's or Canada's powers under the Constitution.

Mr. Wells says that the Meech Lake Accord dooms Newfoundland to have-not status because whatever the Government of Canada gives to Newfoundland or Nova Scotia must be given to richer provinces like Ontario. This is simply wrong.