

Constitution Amendment, 1987

number of people who might have any doubt about the form of Quebec's association and involvement within Canada. It succeeded in doing so and the number of people voting for it came to about 40 per cent.

However, I take very much to heart his criticisms of the 1982 agreement, and I think his criticism of past agreements reflect my own concern about the way in which written constitutions can be used and misused by those with motive to do so.

I understand the Hon. Member perhaps does not share all the reservations and criticisms I have about the Meech Lake Accord. Perhaps the question of consideration of analyses from outside the milieu of those actively involved in the negotiations is one where he has more optimism than I. Yet I think we tend towards the same conclusion, that the Accord is a fully necessary response to the outreach of the Province of Quebec towards integration within our great Canadian Confederation.

[Translation]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate. The Hon. Member for Montreal—Sainte-Marie, who will be followed by the Minister of State (Youth) (Mr. Charest).

Mr. Jean-Claude Malépart (Montreal—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to take part in this historic debate and in a constitutional accord which, to my mind, is incomplete and imperfect. However, when we look at Canada's history, we realize that what we had in 1982 was an imperfect and incomplete constitutional accord. Since Canada was founded in 1867, and even under the Fathers of Confederation, we had an incomplete and imperfect accord. At the time, we are told, there were always pessimists telling the Fathers of Confederation that Canada would never be able to function without an amending formula, that it would be anarchy, that it was impossible and that we would never be able to patriate the Constitution. The impossible happened in 1982. Actually, between 1927 and 1982, fifteen constitutional conferences were held in an attempt to patriate the Constitution and agree on an amending formula, and every time everybody wanted a perfect constitution which, unfortunately, did not reflect reality and did not allow for change, and every time it fell through. In Victoria, we still had pessimists who were saying . . . I call them prophets of gloom and doom; in Victoria we came closest to a perfect accord. Unfortunately, it fell through. There would be no going back.

The pessimists who said that were wrong again. In 1982, we had an accord that once again was incomplete and imperfect. Quebec and our native people were left out of this Constitutional Accord. Today, we are discussing the Meech Lake Accord which is still imperfect and incomplete. It leaves out native people and multiculturalism is not sufficiently protected, but this time it is Quebec's turn to ratify the Canadian Constitution. Today, again, there are pessimists who say that because native people were left out, because of the unanimity

rule and because of the distinct society aspect, the Accord is unacceptable and it will be impossible to change anything in Canada. Come on, you prophets of gloom and doom!

The history of Canada, although there is no amendment formula, although it was simply a legislative measure in London, there is the Supreme Court, the federal and provincial governments had co-operated to provide health insurance, hospital insurance, social programs, old age security pensions, pension plans. All that was done as a result of the good will of people in those days. The pessimists who claim such initiatives could not be taken after the Accord should know better. Your children will be as intelligent and as brilliant as those of earlier generations. If something does not work out in five or ten years they will not be any more stupid than people are today or were before. They will fix it. People who are against the Accord are insulting younger Canadians. These people think there is nothing after them. Prime Ministers and Hon. Members are all here for a finite time. Before Malépart, there was someone else in Sainte-Marie, and someone else before him. The prime Ministers have also changed. Whether we are speaking about Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Pierre Elliot Trudeau, Joe Clark, or anyone else, we are all here for a while to represent the population, and every one of us in his time has done a very good job of defending our own generation. I am convinced that the next generation will succeed even better than we have in protecting the interests of the population.

It is sad to see those who object to the distinct identity of Quebec. We do not find them only in the Liberal Party, but there is also one in the New Democratic Party who has just announced his position and a couple in the Conservative Party. It is sad to see that they still have the same old attitudes and do not understand Quebec. When I say that they are anti-Quebec, it is not because they are racists or because they object to the linguistic concept. Perhaps I am not using the right terms, but I simply want to show that these people do not understand today's Quebec. When they say that they want the *status quo* with the distinct identity, they are wrong. Those who do not want the distinct identity want to maintain the *status quo* of 30 years ago, when Quebec was dominated by the English-speaking minority. Francophones in East Montreal had to speak English when they shopped at Eaton's. The situation has changed today. French is increasingly present. However, something else has changed. Twenty years ago, when someone who spoke neither French nor English arrived in Quebec, he had to become assimilated with the anglophones. Then, the francophones took action to assimilate newcomers in their own community. We must congratulate the Parti Québécois for that. I did not agree with their option, but today, it is different. We have Italians in Quebec, such as the Hon. Member for Bourassa (Mr. Rossi), who is a Quebecker like the Hon. Member for Montreal—Sainte-Marie (Mr. Malépart), but he is an Italian Quebecker while the Member for Montreal—Sainte-Marie is of French background.