

realization. Quebec's cultural reality can fit into a federalist outlook where, thanks to a conjunction of languages and cultures, the essence can be deepened, the vital element retained and riches obtained. This is how modern nations are built. This is how Canada will be built, within a multiplicity that can respect entities.

I know it is with renewed conviction and enthusiasm that we will take all steps and initiatives needed to ensure nobody is hurt by our constitutional exercises. In this country, reciprocity is a requisite for reconciliation—the latter is not possible without the former. We can now feel that this reciprocity is understood and wanted, strongly flowing from the Meech Lake agreement. All we need do now is to translate this new confederative pact into concrete measures.

I have the impression that this country exists in plenitude, that we can acquire the desire to live in it. I know very many Canadians are making exactly the same reflection as I am making. Some made it before, our great predecessors, the visionaries of our country. To them we owe gratitude. But what interests me even more is that others after us will do the same thing because this country, Mr. Speaker, now seems to me to be headed for an irreversible accomplishment.

In conclusion, here is the part of the Sept-Îles statement I keep in mind: Canada is the challenge of men and women of various cultures, languages and religions to resolve their conflicts, harmonize their interests and actively promote the values of respect for others and surpassing oneself.

Mr. Speaker, in Quebec there are injuries to heal, concerns to allay, enthusiasms to rekindle, and links of faith to restore. Canada offers plenty of room for the affirmation of all identities, the respect for all aspirations, and the quest for all ideals.

We are at the dawn of a genuine fresh start if we can substitute the prejudice of the agreement for that of discord. Renewal is the very principle of a democracy, its own way to regain vigour, to purify itself and to take a new expansion.

I have the deep conviction that we are witnessing one of those privileged moments when a whole country opens a new page of history, a page which will be written in a new style of dialogue and exchanges among all the artisans who are building a country.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kempling): Questions or comments? Debate.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Toupin (Terrebonne): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Prime Minister of Canada (Mr. Mulroney) and the provincial Premiers on their open attitude to Quebec at the recent meeting at Meech Lake. This is of course a very important moment in Canadian history, now that we are finally about to recognize Quebec's distinct identity. It is time that formal recognition was given to the fact that the language and culture

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of the majority in Quebec is French and that the concept of a distinct identity was entrenched in the Canadian Constitution.

However, Quebec's distinct identity must be more clearly defined in the forthcoming constitutional text. In fact, there is no definition, or at least none was given in the agreement in principle. For the sake of present and future generations, we must clarify this concept as much as possible. We cannot afford any confusion in this respect. In fact, I am concerned about a statement by Senator Murray, the Minister responsible for Federal-Provincial Relations, who said that "distinct society" does not give any more powers to Quebec, and by the Prime Minister himself, who said on English language television that at Meech Lake, Quebec had not gained any powers it did not already have.

The forthcoming constitutional text must be clearer and more precise, because otherwise, it will be a matter for the courts to decide, while in our democratic society, the basic responsibility for drafting laws lies with our elected representatives.

Mr. Speaker, all Canadians want constitutional peace, and they want a lasting, not a temporary peace. If the Meech Lake agreement in principle leads to confusion, if the constitutional text does not reflect this need for clarity, we can expect to see many more of those long, drawn-out constitutional debates that have left their scars on this country. The forthcoming constitutional text must be drafted on the basis of long term considerations of a higher order.

Mr. Speaker, I am delighted with the clause concerning the appointment of justices to the Supreme Court of Canada and with the clause concerning immigration.

This last provision will have a vital impact in preserving the French identity of Quebec.

As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, the wording to be used in the legal text will be important. I have, however, some reservations with respect to the federal institutions amending formula, particularly with respect to section 42 which is too rigid in my mind.

From a constitutional point of view, and in order to better acknowledge the various realities of the various regions of Canada, the effort of the Federal Government to decentralize its powers for the benefit of provinces is a welcome one. It is welcome, however, provided Canadian men and women in the various regions of the country will derive similar benefits from this devolution of authority, and I think for instance of medicare. It is most desirable, Mr. Speaker, that provinces be able to develop such programs based on their own specific features. It now seems possible to develop such pan-Canadian programs while at the same time decentralizing them in the provinces; the key word here is that in essence they should be equivalent.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, the draft of the legal text to come will be extremely important.