

"If Canada throws away this opportunity for national reconciliation, we will well deserve our fate ...

"I ask English-speaking Canadians to use the brains that God gave them, and some common sense, to save our country from disaster."

Those are strong words from a man known for his thoughtfulness, his prudence and, if anything, a tendency to understate the issues.

On October 11, Premier Wells seemed uncertain about the effects in Quebec of rejection of the Meech Lake Accord. He said,

"What I don't know and I must frankly admit I can't say with any degree of certainty is whether it's (separation) 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."

Premier Robert Bourassa said at the recent opening of the Quebec National Assembly on November 28,

"Quebec will not sit passively and watch with indifference the rest of Canada reject its political will to rejoin the Canadian federation, on the basis of particularly modest demands."

Mr. Wells was quick to respond to Mr. Bourassa. On November 30, he said,

"I can't let myself be led astray on the basis of those kind of misrepresentations that I think do not accurately represent the real situation in Quebec."

That situation in Quebec is the one that just a month before he expressed such uncertainty about.

Mr. Wells has put forward his own proposals to protect Quebec's interests in language and culture. He proposes that those interests be protected at the federal level. But many of these issues do not come within federal jurisdiction.

Culture and language come largely within provincial jurisdiction, and the francophone majority in Quebec wants to feel that they will be able to act through their provincial government to protect their language and culture. Mr. Wells proposals are irrelevant to this.