

common ground. But how could we have ignored what was said at the time in books, articles, seminars, television interviews and speeches by Brian Mulroney, Robert Bourassa, Gil Rémillard and by many senators on this side of the house as well as on the other side? The Meech Lake Accord was not a secret accord. Maybe not enough information was put forward to the public, but it was available to those who wanted to make themselves familiar with it.

A few weeks ago I had the honour of sitting beside the Honourable Robert Stanfield and His Excellency Stephen Lewis to present the Friends of Meech, men and women from all parts of Canada—they were mostly anglophones—willing to speak to anglophones. Robert Stanfield was accused of recreating the “two nations” concept, and I became the grandmother of so many nations that I would not even know in which one I would wish to live. I never thought that I as a journalist and as a woman could have met such animosity. I could not imagine that the distinct society would become distorted or cartooned in such an ugly manner. These are things that Canadians, no matter who they are, pro or con, should never accept.

[*Translation*]

During the past few months, movements for and against Meech have been making their positions clear. Men of good will, on both sides, have expressed their views. Anyone who takes a position on Meech Lake deserves the other side's respect. Surprisingly, however, those who are against Meech Lake are more likely to command that respect. Those who support the accord are has-beens, crypto-separatists like me, unpatriotic, and a tempting subject for political cartoons. The words have been said, not openly but in the offices of those who want power because they feel they have a God-given right to it.

Mrs. Carstairs says:

● (1620)

[*English*]

Meech is dead. Is it? Meech will fail. What then, honourable senators? Throw Quebec out. What then honourable senators? Have you ever thought of the aftermath of Meech if it fails, as it is likely to do? Some say independence—I do not believe that. This is not what—

[*Translation*]

—young and not so young Quebecers say so. But what they say when they come to my house and what they talk about on television or on the radio, is far more serious, as far as I am concerned. For a young Quebecer who is 18 or 20 years old today, Canada doesn't even exist. It is time these things were said openly.

They know they can be just as effective as other members of their generation throughout the world. If there is a message in this speech, which may be the last one I will make in this Chamber on the subject (at least I hope so, for my sake and for your sake as well), as a woman who is a Canadian and a Quebecer, a mother and a grandmother of a French family, I forbid you, English Canadians, (I have no right to do so, but

[Senator Chaput-Rolland.]

this is a free country) to destroy the faith of your sons and mine in a country that your ancestors and mine helped to build. We were in New France 200 years before your ancestors left the British Isles. At the time (don't worry, I won't be long) on the plains of Mr. Abraham Martin or “Martin”, a lone soldier (with the soul of a general), leaned on his musket and dreamed of France, a country to which he was not to return for nearly a century. His name was Jean-François Rolland, a sergeant major of the Regiment of Guyanne. In his thoughts, he was probably already in France.

He never went back to his country. He stayed here to help build this distinct society. Thousands more stayed to found, create and sing the praises of that distinct society whose fundamental characteristics you are incapable of recognizing 300 years later.

For two weeks I have been trying to find words that express neither hate nor animosity but only an immense sadness because deep inside I feel that—

[*English*]

—some things will never be the same. Too many things have been said, both in favour of but mostly against Meech Lake, for French Canadian ears to be able to go on living as if nothing had happened. I do not believe that anymore, but I do believe that we could, if we wanted to, rise up above animosity and prejudice. No one in 300 years has ever succeeded in making French Canadians despair of remaining French Canadians.

[*Translation*]

It is an ironic experience for those of us who have been travelling around the world that in other countries someone who speaks two or three languages is respected. In this country, someone who speaks two languages is despised, or else he or she listens and forgets about the bilingualism bonus. When are we going to start learning our languages in order to better understand each other?

Honourable senators, you may leave this House this is something I have been wanting to do for quite some time!

I am nearing the end of my speech and my trek.

[*English*]

Never in my long career, in 40 years of writing, speaking and fighting for Quebec, at times for Canada and other times against it, have I felt the deep anger which is in me now.

You have the democratic right to be against the Meech Lake Accord, but at least give us Quebecers of French language, culture and French origins the right reasons behind your anger. If you want us out of Canada, be honest about it. We Quebecers think we will save Canada with you, if you give us that chance. Our distinct society will not erode yours—it will reinforce it; it will enhance it. Be attuned to us. Together we might climb the hills of fraternal democracy instead of tumbling down into our secular feuds. The world now is experimenting with la perestroika. The wall of Berlin has fallen down. Is it to be rebuilt in Canada between a French verb and an English pronoun?