

As we in Atlantic Canada know only too well, we will be the first to suffer and the last to recover from any dramatic downturn in the economy. This government's commitment to responsible fiscal management has been critical to maintaining a strong, growing, job-creating economy in all provinces. We will maintain that commitment.

Let me turn now to a matter of even greater importance - a united Canada. No issue is more critical to the unity of our nation than the Meech Lake constitutional accord.

As a great Canadian said just last week,

"For the federal government and the provinces to support Meech Lake represents ... a newer vision of a federal-provincial relationship and the end of the debate about the place of Quebec ...

"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."

The speaker was Robert Stanfield. I hope all Canadians will heed what Mr. Stanfield said, but I fear at least one Canadian, Premier Clyde Wells, was not even listening.

Mr. Wells is a sincere man, but he is tragically misguided. He now has the power to wreck the best chance for national unity that this country has today ... and he says that he plans to use it.

Mr. Parizeau, the leader of the separatists in Quebec, is filled with joy by Mr. Wells' promise to defeat the Meech Lake Accord. Why? Mr. Parizeau wants to put the boots to English Canada. The Western Canadian radicals ... the so-called Reform Party ... are filled with glee by Mr. Wells' promise to defeat the Meech Lake Accord. Why? They want to put the boots to Quebec.

Mr. Wells is oblivious to all this. He is mesmerized by the dream of his old hero, Pierre Trudeau, the dream of an all-powerful central government pursuing what it sees as the national interest. Under that approach, Pierre Trudeau put the boots to everyone. Today, Pierre Trudeau is gone ... gone because he divided and angered the nation. But his policies live on with Mr. Wells.