

*Constitutional Amendment, 1987*

of the private sector, the labour movement and volunteer organizations to make a special effort.

More specifically as far as the provinces are concerned, the government will encourage and help them promote the expansion of francophone and anglophone minorities, particularly by providing provincial and municipal services in both official languages and enabling them to be educated in their respective language.

Given this firm government pledge and the constitutional guarantee that provincial legislatures will protect this duality, we can indeed look to the future with optimism. This constitutional guarantee is all the more significant that it is spelt out in an interpretative rule. At least that is the view of expert witnesses who appeared before the committee. As Mr. Robert Decary pointed out, the Constitution and therefore the Charter as well as linguistic rights will have to be so interpreted as to ensure the protection of francophones.

On June 3, the First Ministers confirmed the role of all Governments in protecting duality. It may not be much, but they all see this as a giant step forward.

Still, many of them had expected more. Spokesmen for francophones outside Quebec and their supporters would have liked all Governments to be given the role of promoting as well as protecting Canada's fundamental characteristic, namely the presence of francophones and anglophones throughout Canada.

Senator Murray stated that on June 3 the First Ministers had examined—and actually they did—a number of avenues to that end. It had then to be recognized that despite the Prime Minister's personal efforts, the consensus could not go any further than it did.

People will ask, since the provinces will not accept a promotional role, that we at least bind the Canadian Parliament to such a proposal, if only to cast in stone the commitments it made up till now at the legislative level. This is what the Liberal Party is asking for in its series of amendment proposals. We are asked to reopen the Accord to stress the role of both Parliament and the provinces that would so wish to promote our duality, adding that since that commitment only involves Parliament and some of the provinces, it would easily command unanimity.

But to those who make such a suggestion or proposal, I would like to submit two points. First, according to the testimonies produced, the Joint Committee Report, and the comments of those who negotiated the Accord—and I am referring here to all the First Ministers—it is clear that any reopening of the Accord for anything else but the correction of a major error or a substantial oversight would be viewed as a reopening of negotiations. From then on, everyone could propose changes. And in the opinion of many people, that is a recipe for failure. I share that view, Mr. Speaker.

If 25 years of constitutional negotiations in Canada were needed to bring us as a nation to that day of June 3 on which finally, after pondering and negotiating, the First Ministers

finally reached a consensus, and when we say this is a canvas that is weaved together, I believe it would be illusive to believe we could now reopen the Accord in order to perhaps placate concerns that may seem legitimate. If we did that, we would inevitably be asking for an end to the Meech Lake Accord, and if that Accord were to break down we might have to wait another 25 years or more and without being a prophet of gloom, I can assure you that if this time we say no to Quebec, a lot of time will be needed to repair such a serious error.

But the people who propose that Parliament and some provinces only do the promotion of the French culture within their exclusive jurisdictions, could perhaps more importantly think of the impact a commitment by Parliament alone or a few Governments to promote duality could have. Clearly, Parliament is already promoting this duality, and a constitutional commitment would do no more actually than the Official Languages Act already provides. The same goes for certain provinces.

However, we may wonder whether that commitment by Parliament or a few Governments to promote duality could not be interpreted as encouraging the status quo in the other provinces. Indeed, why should a province that has nothing more than a protective role under the Constitution promote duality if that is the responsibility of a few Governments only?

I submit to you, Madam Speaker, that under the Constitutional French-speaking Canadians outside Quebec would become second-class citizens in some of the provinces and first-class citizens in other provinces. I feel that I cannot subscribe to such a constitutional situation in this country.

Today with the Meech Lake Accord, and the Constitutional Accord of 1987, we have a common role which is to protect our cultural duality and the Government of Canada can encourage provinces to play that role and go beyond that. I am not suggesting that Parliament should not assume the constitutional role and do more but I point out that we have to look seriously at the consequences before compelling it to do so by means of a reconsideration of the consensus reached on June 3.

To my mind it would be highly preferable to take advantage of the forthcoming constitutional discussions to add to the duality already provided for in the Accord.

Madam Speaker, I should now like to deal with another aspect of the Accord which has been discussed. A distinguished critic of the Accord, and I do not mean the leader of the Liberal party in New Brunswick, but rather the Right Hon. Pierre Trudeau who wrote on May 27 last: That the Constitutional Accord gave Quebec a competence which other provinces did not have, that is, he said, to promote the concentration of the French culture in Quebec. He saw therein a bad omen for French-speaking minorities.

As a French-speaking Canadian from outside Quebec, I admit that I do not understand his argument concerning French-speaking Canadians from outside Quebec.