

*Official Languages*

the House was that we believe fundamentally it should be a decision that takes place within the democratic chambers of our country; that it should be a decision arrived at by elected members; that it should demonstrate that the authority and legitimacy of making decisions for the protection of minorities can be and should be made by elected representatives. It is important for the House to re-establish and reaffirm once again our commitment to that area.

What future can there be for parliamentary government in Canada if in every legislature certain groups try to halt the process when their arguments fail? How can legislatures remain the central focus of legitimacy and authority in our society? How can they remain the central decision-making body if a government has to prorogue because some of its members prevent the taking of a vote—perhaps the most fundamental right of any democracy, the right finally to decide?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Axworthy:** I believe the strong message of this resolution which we are putting forward in the House today is to underline clearly the commitment to that process and to give a sense of hope and confidence to all Canadians, minorities or otherwise, that this is the place where decisions are made, that this is the place where rights are protected and that this is the place where liberties are defended. We may disagree, as we do every day, about the nature, extent and character of those rights and liberties, but this is the place, in the Chamber, where those decisions must take place. We must say in our resolution, which we will through its unanimous adoption, that that really is the underpinning of our society.

This is why it is so important for us to encourage and to provide every ounce of persuasion, both as a Chamber and as individuals, to the leadership, the political people and the elected members in Manitoba to find once again a basis of moderation, to search out for a common sense solution and to adopt a position which will firmly recognize those rights in the Constitution, firmly prefer and offer the services required, and do so in a way which will extinguish the fumes and vapours of extremism that are beginning to seep over that territory and have the possibility of spreading even further.

We have an opportunity today to build a fortress against any further extension of those tragic and sometimes very unhappy circumstances which we see happening. It is my hope that through this resolution we will be able to provide that sense of encouragement and sense of support to the Assembly of Manitoba to come to a resolution.

It may be important as well for Members of the House to consider whether there should be further steps, to look at the basic spirit and essence of the May 16 agreement which recognized the importance of a resolution being passed in both Houses, and to determine whether, if it would help, if we had the sense through consultation and discussion with our confrères in Manitoba and among ourselves, and if we were able to move a resolution based upon that May 16 agreement in this House again entrenching and confirming those rights, it

might provide a further incentive, a further impetus and a further motivation for Manitoba to pass its resolution so that this House can live up to its responsibilities and complete our side of the bargain.

I leave that as a matter of some examination, some judgment and some assessment by Members of all Parties in this House. I think it is our responsibility to speak out and provide suasion, but it may also be important at this point in time or in the near future—perhaps when the House returns after our break—to address the further issue of whether it is time for a resolution here to demonstrate clearly to the official opposition in Manitoba that their amendments and subamendments, which are simply there to validate some statutes, are not acceptable to the House of Commons.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Axworthy:** I have taken up enough time of the House. I do not think we have to go over the history or the details of the organ; I am sure we are all well familiar and associated with it. I would simply express once again on behalf of our side our appreciation to other Members of the House, knowing that we all share the same spirit and interest in having the problems of language rights in Manitoba resolved, not just for Manitobans but for all Canadians. We really are debating today, once again, the future of this country.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Brian Mulroney (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, in a perceptive column Fred Cleverly of the *Winnipeg Free Press* described a recent meeting of the grassroots movement in Manitoba: the meeting was peaceful; the tone temperate; the participants, hard-working Manitobans. They were neither extremists nor reactionaries, as some have called them. They were ordinary Manitobans, articulating a vision of Canada, a vision I can understand but cannot share on this important point.

[*Translation*]

On October 6 of last year, I announced on behalf of my colleagues the unanimous support of our caucus for the resolution tabled that day by my colleague, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). I said at the time, and I shall, if I may, say it again today, that our support for the French speaking minority in Manitoba, as well as for other minorities in this country, is a strong and lasting one. I also said that this resolution compelled us to remember our overriding commitments in this country of almost limitless space, overflowing with great opportunities for the future. These commitments comprise a respect for our linguistic and other minorities, a long-held desire to encourage their flowering, and the duty to protect the rights of our minorities—wherever they may be.

Mr. Speaker, the same thoughts are appropriate to the resolution tabled in the House today.

On February 15 of this year, following a caucus meeting, I announced publicly our renewed support for the Franco