

*Constitution Amendment, 1987*

others as over-emphasizing their personal perspective to the detriment of their public responsibility. If we oppose, we can be seen legitimately as individualists, always wanting our own way.

It was the Austrian statesman Metternich who said that politics is the art of the possible. In voting on the Meech Lake Accord, we must set aside what seems to be the demonology of the view of provincial politicians. We have to remember that there are those at every other level of Government whose commitment to Canada is as strong as ours, whose faith in Canada is as strong as ours.

Obviously, I have a deep desire to see the amendments proposed by my Party or those by the Liberal Party largely incorporated in a changed and improved Meech Lake Accord. There does come a point however at which we have to look at what is before us. I will conclude then by saying that the process of discussion in this House must surely have raised in the minds, not only of the Government but of all other Governments in Canada, the need for some form of codicil or addendum to the Meech Lake Accord which will recognize the very serious and legitimate concerns that have been raised.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gauthier:** Mr. Speaker, I have a brief question to put to the Hon. Member. One of the amendments brought forward by the Liberal Party would require, in subsection 2.(2), that the federal Government not only preserve but promote the fundamental characteristic of the country, our two official languages, and that it do so actively. I wonder if the Hon. Member will support and vote for including the requirement, at least for the federal level, of not only preserving but particularly promoting the linguistic duality.

**Mr. Parry:** I should thank the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier for his question. Mr. Speaker, if you read the amendments proposed by his Party you will note that they are more detailed than the ones proposed by my colleagues from Yorkton—Melville (Mr. Nystrom) and New Westminster—Coquitlam (Mrs. Jewett).

I think we recognize, Mr. Speaker, that the present Government cannot accept, word for word, an amendment proposed by the Liberal Party. I believe it would be more realistic for the opposition parties to propose amendments of a general nature which would allow the Government to incorporate their substance in its own document.

On the particular question, however, I agree, Mr. Speaker, that the federal Government has the responsibility not only to promote our two official languages, but also to support and promote the survival, continued existence, and use of native languages which were used on this continent before English and French.

[English]

**Mr. O'Neil:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Hon. Member for many of his comments on this historic

document which offers Canada and all Canadians an opportunity to move into the 20th century as a country that is willingly united.

I would say by way of comment that unlike many Hon. Members who have spoken and those who will speak, I do not view the referendum of 1980 as a great success for Canadians. I believe that the results of the 1980 referendum indicate that we had failed as a country to deal with the legitimate aspirations of the people of Quebec.

In 1980, fully 40 per cent of the population of Quebec voted to leave Confederation, and about 50 per cent of the French-speaking people of Quebec voted to leave Canada as we know it. That was an alarming result; hardly a victory, simply a sad result.

We as a country gave a commitment during the referendum debate of 1980 to do something to make that 40 per cent of Quebecers more comfortable within Confederation. That is what the ensuing debate was about, and it was a great miscarriage of justice and a breach of promise when in 1982, the Government of Canada, in concert with the provinces, proceeded to effect major constitutional change without the consent of the very people it was supposed to benefit.

It was in an effort to right this wrong that in 1987, the First Ministers of Canada reached a constitutional Accord which brings Quebec willingly into our constitutional family. It is an imperfect document, of that there can be no doubt. But so have all constitutional documents been imperfect.

The 1982 constitutional agreement was grossly imperfect in that it excluded Quebec. It was grossly imperfect in the manner in which it put the Charter of Rights in the Constitution, permitting provinces to opt out of the protections of the Charter. The 1867 Act itself was imperfect. Every constitutional amendment, one could argue, has been imperfect in one way or another.

But what we must balance is the need to correct an historical wrong, a wrong that could form and probably would form the basis for a separatist movement in the future. The René Lévesque of 1995, in the absence of constitutional reconciliation, would have a far stronger case to make than the René Lévesque of 1976 and 1981.

● (1230)

I urge all Hon. Members to take the opportunity presented in this Accord to unite our country and make it stronger so we can face the challenges collectively and in a united fashion.

**Mr. Parry:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my friend for his serious and scholarly contribution. I must say that I do not really share what I see as a pessimistic interpretation of the results of the Quebec referendum. I have to observe that the use of referendums to manipulate public opinion has seldom been better demonstrated than in the phrasing of the text of the question on which the people of Quebec were asked to vote. I believe it was phrased in order to catch the maximum