



The Queen of Canada proclaims the country's new constitution. (photo: J Merrithew)

discussion we have finally decided to retrieve what is properly ours. It is with happy hearts, and with gratitude for the patience displayed by Great Britain, that we are preparing to acquire today our complete national sovereignty. It is my deepest hope that Canada will match its new legal maturity with that degree of political maturity which will allow us all to make a total commitment to the Canadian ideal...

'It is true that our will to live together has sometimes appeared to be in deep hibernation; but it is there nevertheless, living and tenacious, in the hearts of Canadians of every province and territory. I simply wish that the bringing home of our Constitution marks the end of a long winter, the breaking up of the ice-jams and the beginning of a new spring. What we are celebrating today is not so much the completion of our task, but the renewal of our hope – not so much an ending, but a fresh beginning.'



The proclamation ceremonies on Parliament Hill. (photo: R Vroom)



The proclamation of the new Canadian constitution.

The proclamation ceremonies on Parliament Hill were marked with a Royal Parade, a 21-gun salute and, almost the precise moment when the Queen signed the proclamation, a torrential downpour. After the deluge the Queen insisted on a 20-minute walk-about on Parliament Hill to meet and talk to some of the 32,000 spectators. The Canadian forces Sunbirds, an aerial acrobatic team, performed a series of hair-raising swoops and formation pyrotechnics, almost removing the top of the Peace Tower. The party continued until the late hours, with state banquets in Ottawa and celebrations throughout the nation.

As to the worth of the new Constitution itself the Canadian people also had strong opinions. No less than 80.3 percent of those declaring themselves in a Gallup Poll on 19 June were certain that the Constitution would be a 'good thing' for Canada. Even in Quebec, fully 75.4 percent agreed.



A sudden shower didn't stop the Queen from making a 'walk-about' among the thousands of participants at the proclamation ceremonies in Ottawa. (AP photo)