

*[Translation]*

But in 1981, in the wake of the 1980 referendum in Quebec, the momentous decision was taken to bring our Constitution home without unanimous consent, specifically without the consent of Quebec.

An important element in the victory of the federalist side in Quebec was a commitment by the then Prime Minister to renew federalism—that a «no vote» was not a vote for the status quo.

Few, if any, who fought for Canada in that difficult referendum a decade ago ever thought that the reform would eventually be carried out in such a way as to attract the support of all the provinces—except Quebec.

Perhaps things might have turned out differently if the Canadian Government had waited to ascertain if the leader of the federalist side, Mr. Claude Ryan, would win the next provincial election. The next election was but a few months away. So why not wait and see whether the leader of the Liberal Party could succeed?

But the decision was made to proceed without the approval of Quebec's national assembly. And the Parti Québécois, a political party committed to the dismemberment of Canada, was re-elected to office with 49 percent of the popular vote. That was almost 10 years ago.

Obviously, Canada's problems in this area of our national life did not begin last summer. As it turned out, the opportunity to negotiate with a federalist Premier in Quebec, did not come again until 1986, when all 10 Premiers agreed to bring Quebec back into the Constitutional family. The Meech Lake Accord—a modest set of five constitutional changes—was the result.

The failure of two provincial legislatures to pass the Meech Lake Accord in June ended a chapter in Canada's continuing search for constitutional reform. It did not mean, however, that we should close the books on Canada. It did mean that we had entered a new and more dangerous period in our national life.

*[English]*

Danger and opportunity are often two sides of the same coin. The danger we face gives us the opportunity to rethink our system and to chart a brand new future for our country.

*Government Orders*

The starting point is recognition of the value of what we have achieved together as a country. Partly because we came together and stayed together as an act of will rather than in the fires and the destruction of war and partly because we co-exist in North America with the world's most powerful nation, we Canadians tend to undervalue our own achievements and our own accomplishments.

As we think about our future we would perhaps be wise, as Robbie Burns put it, to see ourselves as others see us. We need to reflect on the extraordinary benefits that Canadian citizenship brings to us all. Wherever we come from, whatever language we speak, in whatever region we live, Canada is not perfect but it is one of the most magnificent nations on the face of this earth.

We need to recognize that during a century when the extremes of nationalism and racism have taken 100 million lives and caused incalculable suffering to humanity, we here in Canada, with our faults and our imperfections, managed to build one of the most civil, cosmopolitan and one of the most admired nations on earth.

We need to remind ourselves that our system of justice which guarantees equality before the law for every Canadian is widely respected around the world. We need to stop and think that with a population of only 26 million, that ranks somewhere in the neighbourhood of 31st or 32nd in the world, we have overcome both a forbidding climate and rugged geography to build the eighth largest economy in the entire world. While many countries struggle just to put bread on their tables for their citizens, we continue to enjoy, despite our economic problems, a broad range of social services and one of the best standards of living anywhere in the world.

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While industrialization came at a substantial cost to Canada's natural environment, Canadians are adopting a new ethic of sustainable development and enjoying cleaner air and clearer water and better health and a better quality of life than most people on earth dare dream of.

We need to appreciate that while Canada achieved recognition as a middle power following the Second World War, Canada now enjoys substantial international influence and respect and more capacity than ever before to advance and protect the interests of all Canadians, French speaking and English speaking Canadians.