

government with a clarity of purpose. We need effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery of services”.

As you can all see, some very important viewpoints were presented at the constitutional meetings that took place in my riding. I must say I am very proud of all my constituents who involved themselves in this process.

To conclude, I would like to say how much I appreciate the time and the effort that went into the Haldimand—Norfolk constitutional meetings. I now realize like many other Canadians that the people of my riding are working together in promoting our great country. Moreover, there really was a realization that we need to rejuvenate national pride and restore a national sense of purpose and a common cause.

The conclusions reached at the constitutional panel meetings in Haldimand—Norfolk are a real reflection on the Canadian values of fairness, sharing, caring and compassion, but most important the concept of compromise.

The meetings that took place all over Canada had an underlying theme of compromise, recognizing that without it this country really does not stand a chance.

I would like to end by quoting an important passage presented in Mrs. Edmonds’ and Mrs. Howe’s brief before the committee this morning. It is something that I think all Canadians should think about: “Nothing can be gained by dwelling on past grievances. Bearing in mind past mistakes, we must put old grudges aside and move ahead in the 1990s, working together for the future”.

I would like to thank everyone who participated in these discussions for caring so much about Canada and caring so much about our people, and for taking the time to get involved in the future of their country.

**Mr. Bob Corbett (Fundy—Royal):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this debate which may be a milestone in the development of our country or perhaps the turning point. I trust that we will take the right decisions in the days and the months ahead.

I represent the constituency of Fundy—Royal in New Brunswick, Atlantic Canada, and I believe that my constituents fairly represent the feelings and attitudes not only of Atlantic Canadians and New Brunswickers

but Canadians in general, particularly those Canadians from outside the province of Quebec.

• (1920)

Over the last months I have had an opportunity of conversing with them to gain their opinions. I would like to share with the House and nation some of their thoughts with reference to what this country is all about and what the future of it should be, particularly in relation to how it would affect Atlantic Canada.

Recently, some have called for a wholesale restructuring of our Constitution which would include a new division of powers. This year, Canada and our Constitution will celebrate their 125th birthdays. It is a Constitution which has seen us through massive urbanization, two world wars, the Great Depression and the technological revolution. It clearly has some merit.

It is important that we do not overlook the remarkable flexibility of our Constitution by ignoring these achievements and completely restructuring our fundamental law.

The context in which the national unity debate is taking place is clearly a difficult one. The recession has Canadians’ attention focused on the economy and there is a tendency to be somewhat apathetic where the Constitution is concerned. That is understandable, but surely all of our problems pale in comparison to the very unity of our country.

Economic recovery will be meaningless at the end of the day if we have no nation. We must make unity first, and it must be our top priority. It is important that we, as Canadians, are fully aware of what is at stake. We must carefully weigh our options and discard those that would tear us apart rather than unite us.

As with the Meech Lake Accord, the underlying purpose of the current constitutional package is to bring Quebec into the constitutional fold as a full partner. Abraham Lincoln astutely predicted prior to the American civil war: “A house divided against itself cannot stand”. Without Quebec as a full participating partner in our federation, our house, if not divided, surely is on a precarious foundation.

Equality in the Canadian context has never meant identical treatment. Indeed, each province negotiated its own terms of union with Canada. That is why British Columbia got the promise of its railroad. Newfoundland