

RIDEAU HALL

January 30, 1990

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that the Honourable John Sopinka, Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court of Canada, in his capacity as Deputy Governor General, will proceed to the Senate Chamber today, the 30th day of January, 1990, at 5:00 p.m., for the purpose of giving Royal Assent to certain Bills.

Yours sincerely,

JEAN M. SÉVIGNY
Deputy Secretary, Operations

The Honourable
The Speaker of the Senate
Ottawa

[English]

AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

CONSIDERATION OF FIFTH REPORT OF COMMITTEE—ORDER STANDS

On the Order:

Resuming the debate on the consideration of the Fifth Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry (farm financing) presented in the Senate on 20th December, 1989.—(*Honourable Senator Hays*).

Hon. C. William Doody (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, this item stands in the name of Senator Hays. I understand that he and Senator Chaput-Rolland have had a discussion. With leave, we would like to move up the tenth order, which now stands in the name of Senator Nurgitz. Then Senator Nurgitz will yield to Senator Chaput-Rolland.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is it agreed?**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

Order stands.

MEECH LAKE CONSTITUTIONAL ACCORD AND CANADIAN CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming the debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Beaudoin calling the attention of the Senate to the Meech Lake Constitutional Accord and to the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.—(*Honourable Senator Nurgitz*).

Hon. S. Chaput-Rolland: Honourable senators, I will begin first by thanking Senator Hays for agreeing to advance this order. One of these days I shall yield to him with great pleasure.

[The Hon. the Speaker.]

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, honourable senators, I want to say that yesterday French-speaking Canadians were deeply touched by the fact that His Excellency the Governor General did manage to learn French in so little time and to express himself in excellent French in this chamber. I do not think I would be overstepping the bounds of propriety as a Quebecer if I were to ask you, Mr. Speaker, to tell him how impressed we were by his recent achievement. This can only mean that—

[English]

If motivation is there, it is possible to surpass oneself.

[Translation]

Honourable senators, as well if not better than most of you I know that for some time now, if you wanted to be popular at a party in Quebec or at a reception—

[English]

You will find yourself in solitary splendour if you so much as mention Meech. But then be bold and ask friends how many of them have ever read the text of the accord and you will find yourself in cold and hostile loneliness. If you dare ask who in the room supports the accord, somebody, if not your hostess, is bound to offer you a scotch or a vodka, but the ice will be in her eyes, not in your glass.

That, my eminent colleagues, is our present constitutional reality, and probably your own state of mind as I rise to speak, but speak I will, because I did not come back after months of soul searching to sit and sleep but to stand and speak on things in which I believe, and assume responsibility, as I always have done in the past and will in the present and the future, for all the words I have pronounced and written and will probably say.

[Translation]

Neither my heart nor my political thoughts are set in concrete; I live and I react to our evolution with my emotions and my reactions. What I thought yesterday is not necessarily what I will think tomorrow, true as it is that Quebec-Canada confrontations have always been a permanent feature of Canadian politics.

François Mauriac, a great French writer and polemist, one of the most outstanding political authors I know once said:

I have discovered that the honour and dignity of a journalist consist in saying what he thinks when he thinks it rather than being afraid to contradict himself.

This thought has been with me for nearly 20 years.

[English]

And I have no intention of forgetting this very difficult lesson.

For a Quebecer today it takes almost heroism to believe in Meech, to state our principles and to cling to our chair before we are thrown out of a newsroom, a living room, or your own house if your sons and daughters are against the accord.

I am going to repeat a phrase I have used now for many years, depending on the occasion. This will be a crucial year for Canada. I have said that during Duplessis' time. Oh, yes, I