

*The Constitution**[Translation]*

Madam Speaker, finally, I must say, to you and to the other members of this House, that it is unfortunate that we did not obtain the agreement of the tenth province, the province of Quebec. I feel that the Premier of Quebec had a duty here to forget his party and to act as the representative of the province of Quebec. There are only three clauses that separate us. Considerable progress has been made on two of the clauses, and if misgivings still exist, we are prepared to discuss them. Considerable gains have been made in the last two days, both with respect to Section 28, which guarantees the equality of men and women in the Constitution, and in our present discussion on the entrenchment of aboriginal rights in the Constitution. In the days to come we could still find common ground for agreement, which would enable Quebec to join the rest of Canada on the day we give our country a new Constitution, the day when we shall achieve a new level of maturity in this country, when people will have equal rights and when we can be different while at the same time sharing the responsibilities and privileges of being Canadians.

[English]

Today is a great day for Canada. We will have a better country. There will be more justice, more friendship, more sharing in our land. Canada, as I have said so many times, is a great country. When we have finished our work, it will be a greater country of which we can all be proud. Today we are making sure this country will survive. It is a worthy cause. For all of us, nothing is better than Canada. Vive le Canada!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, I want to begin with two brief remarks. I say this genuinely in respect for the parliamentary tradition. I regret that on this matter that goes so much to the heart of what Canada is about and touches so directly the concerns of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), particularly on one of those rare days when I have something good to say about him, the Prime Minister has chosen to leave this House before I have the opportunity as Leader of the Official Opposition to respond to the introduction of the resolution by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chrétien).

I understand he is busy. We are all busy. This is a matter which has commanded his attention for some time. I would have hoped that his respect for the institution of Parliament would have been such that he might have been prepared to stay. Does the Minister of Justice—

Mr. Chrétien: Madam Speaker, I would like to make a suggestion to the Leader of the Opposition. Rather than split his speech in two, he could postpone his speech until two o'clock. The Prime Minister could be here. It would then not be necessary to debate this problem. I am sure the Leader of the Opposition will be making an important speech and we should not force him to split it in two.

Mr. Clark: Madam Speaker, I am simply interested in my audience. If I will have the benefit of speaking to the Prime Minister when we come back, I will call it one o'clock.

Madam Speaker: This House stands adjourned until two o'clock.

At 12.48 p.m. the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

Madam Speaker: When the House adjourned the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) had the floor.

Mr. Clark: Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me, naturally, to rise in this debate. I think in our minds over the past several months there was some doubt as to whether or not this stage of the debate would ever occur. I think all of us who have faith in Canada are pleased that we were able to force respect for the Supreme Court of Canada, for our Parliament and for the processes of Canadian legislation to the extent that it has resulted in this new, very much improved resolution before the House of Commons. It has afforded members of the House the opportunity to make further improvements to a resolution much improved over the one that was dealt with through the last several years.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: I do not intend this to be a partisan speech at all, Madam Speaker.

I would ask the Minister of Justice and members of Parliament not to seek partisan gain in this debate. I think that would be advice that all of us would endorse. The minister should not seek too frequently to blame others, whether they are provinces, native groups or others, for deficiencies in the resolution that is before the House of Commons. If the minister engages too much in that, I think there will be the temptation on the part of others to engage in a tone of debate that will not be helpful in advancing our processes here.

This is not another phase in the constitutional debate. This is very much a new phase. There is now a much different atmosphere in the country. Everyone taking part in the debate bears some of the scars of compromise, and there is nothing at all dishonourable about that. Compromise is the way we make Canada work. However, to end with compromise, one must start with principle.

I understand the Prime Minister will be arriving soon. I wish the Prime Minister were here when on one of those few occasions in the House I will pay tribute to him. I think the last time was when he promised to leave. I will not spend too much of my time in the debate in praise of the Prime Minister, but I would like to say that I will not soon forgive him for some of the consequences resulting from his methods with regard to the Constitution. I think it is appropriate that this