

Quebecers to say yes to Canada with pride and confidence.

• (1540)

[English]

Many times in the course of public consultations during the past two years Canadians have complained that our country is over-governed, that government is too far removed from people and that people are too far removed from the decision-making process.

I believe there is a good deal of truth in this assertion, along with ongoing questions about Quebec's role as Canada's only French-speaking majority province, problems in the Atlantic, and problems of western alienation. These are problems that speak to the future of a renewed federation and they have become, obviously all of them—the aboriginal question—fundamental to our national debate.

Prime Minister Pearson stated the approach and the philosophy that has motivated most Canadian Prime Ministers from Macdonald to the present occupant of the office. In his memoirs, Mr. Pearson described his view of co-operative federalism which he believed was the only nature of federalism that could apply. It was the only approach that in the longer haul could work. He reviewed, as well, how common sense should always prevail in a federation over sterile ideologies.

I quote Prime Minister Pearson: "My viewpoint was one of sympathy to the provinces in their desire for more control and for more resources. By co-operative action one could encourage the devolution of power, with the provision that a province could, if it wished, restore authority to Ottawa. Although the federal government had to retain intact certain essential powers, there were many other functions of government exercised by Ottawa which could properly and beneficially be left to the provinces. By forcing a centralism perhaps acceptable to some provinces but not to Quebec, and by insisting that Quebec must be like the others, we could destroy Canada".

### *Government Orders*

Mr. Pearson said: "This became my doctrine of federalism. I wanted to decentralize up to a certain point as the way to strengthen, indeed to establish and maintain unity. I remember being severely rebuked for suggesting that some of the centralists were the greatest separatists". Mr. Pearson concluded: "In fact, I believe that our administration helped to unite the country by broadening the capacities of the provinces to discharge their constitutional powers in our federal system". I think the history of the last 25 years has already proved that Mr. Pearson was completely right.

I do not claim that the Charlottetown agreement is the last word in the needed effort to modernize the Canadian federation. I do say that this agreement will make possible the evolution of a more flexible federation in which there is a better distribution of responsibilities between the two levels of government.

In the wake of this agreement the question will arise as it does following any change at all in the *status quo*: Who will speak for Canada? The answer is clear. The federal authority is in power to discharge all of the responsibilities of a strong, national government. Pursuant to this negotiation, tomorrow as today, the Parliament and the Government of Canada will speak strongly and effectively for Canada and for all Canadians.

The federal government must be able to devote itself to the national interest unencumbered by a host of responsibilities that can perhaps be more effectively and properly discharged by the provinces. The provinces must be able to serve their citizens and establish priorities in their areas of responsibility without undue interference from Ottawa.

The proposed limitation on the use of the federal spending power for shared-cost programs in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction is not an unreasonable proposal at all. It reflects this fundamental approach.

As noted earlier, in the Charlottetown agreement we have also acknowledged the exclusive provincial jurisdiction in a number of fields and agree that the federal government should withdraw from activity in those fields on terms to be established in intergovernmental agreements.