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elected based on the position that they take, and the whole thing becomes a foregone conclusion.

Some argue that a referendum does not protect the rights of the minorities, that it is in itself in a funny way anti-democratic.

Suffice it say, Mr. Speaker, that a number of these questions will be considered by this committee, will be considered by this Parliament, and I hope will be considered by Canadians over all. It is absolutely essential that as Canadians we start to think about the future of this country. It is not good enough to say: "Let one part of it leave and we will continue on without it." It quite simply does not work that way. It will not work that way in terms of economics; it will not work that way in terms of the political future of what is left. And it denies a history that we are all so terribly proud of, if we take the time to think about it. It denies the construction of this country that has been built over 500 years of history, and it denies the fundamental approach that was taken in 1864 and in 1867 to set this country up.

We must recognize that what we have seen in the last 125 years, the contributions we have made to the world, the way we take care of ourselves as Canadians, and how we present ourselves to the world is based on so many people coming together. This country does not exist without Quebec. It is an opportunity today to be looked on in a positive way, for all of us to see a future that we have come together, a conclusion that we have developed together, for a great country for the 21st century.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Phillip Edmonston (Chambly): I was struck by my colleague from Newfoundland when he talked about the elements of a possible agreement with Quebec, maybe in relation to the next Constitution that we might negotiate.

I have a comment to make on a subject that I think the hon. member touched upon. There is one thing that goes beyond all the provincial boundaries and it is the values that we have in common.

Because, you know Mr. Speaker, I do not have the cultural background that people born in Quebec or in Ontario would have, I come from the United States, but I have enjoyed taking the time to study at both cultures:

the Quebec culture, of course, and the English Canadian culture. But I can see there are obvious differences.

But there are similarities. And if we are not prepared to recognize those some similarities, whether we come from an English or French background, we really refuse to acknowledge this reality. One of the similarities that I think the two cultures have in common here in Canada is the spirit of compromise. I think we have had this similarity for a long time. We can now see some changes, of course. We notice a certain polarization which is the result I think, of provocative action on both sides.

There have been some actions that have been considered provocative by the English speaking Canadian. I am referring of course to Mr. Bourassa's Bill 178. As for me, I was perfectly satisfied with Bill 101, and I thought that Bill 178 was really a nonsense. But Mr. Bourassa is the one who made it into law. English-speaking Canadians considered that their freedom of speech had been violated. Mr. Speaker, as a former reporter, I can tell you that when French-speaking Quebecers saw people in Brampton, I think it was, in Ontario, trample on the Quebec flag, the atmosphere in the province of Quebec was electric. I cannot begin to tell you how awful it was to see their reaction. It was really electric.

One thing is for sure, when those provocative acts took place, I could see the spirit of compromise beginning to vanish in Canada. Today, in the House of Commons, following the failure of the Meech Lake Accord, we find for the first time in the history of our country a Federal political Party which preaches sovereignty, something unheard of in the past. Personally, I feel it is quite natural to have a Bloc Quebecois, because during the Meech Lake debate Quebecers found some arguments revolting. It should be emphasized that if there were no Bloc Quebecois, there might be some other group, because in Quebec people are polarized just like everywhere else.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, I suggest the government should accept the blame for the polarization which resulted from the improper handling of Meech Lake. Finally, because of the unsound process we have inherited from Mr. Trudeau and Mr. Chrétien, I suggest that the failure of the Meech Lake Accord was inevitable.