

THE CONSTITUTION

MEECH LAKE ACCORD—TRIBUTE TO PRIME MINISTER AND PREMIERS

Mr. Gilles Grondin (Saint-Maurice): Mr. Speaker, because of the time factor, I did not have a chance to speak to the subject yesterday, but today, I would like to point out that I am proud, both as a Canadian and a Quebecer, to join my leader and my colleagues in the Liberal Party in congratulating the Prime Minister and the provincial Premiers on concluding an agreement that will enable Quebec to come back to the Canadian family.

I particularly appreciated the speech made by the Hon. Member for Laval-des-Rapides (Mr. Garneau). His parliamentary experience, acquired in Quebec and Ottawa, shone through in a speech that was clear and unambiguous, a message where reason and passion were in complete harmony.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Bouchard) on the excellence of his speech. It is my view that in a debate like the one we had yesterday, there is no room for political partisanship, and that we must acknowledge the efforts of each Member, regardless of his political affiliation.

An opportunity like this one, to enable Quebec to sign the Constitution Act, 1982, is not an everyday occurrence. I hope to have a chance to express my personal views on the subject in this House before the official signing of the Accord by the First Ministers.

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● (1405)

[English]

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SUPPORT FOR MEECH LAKE ACCORD

Hon. Bob Layton (Lachine): Mr. Speaker, reports of the differences of opinion in the Liberal caucus yesterday indicate a return to name-calling and a portrait of Quebec in two camps. Such is not the case. I believe most Quebecers support the position taken by the editorial board of *The Gazette* when it said:

It is a matter of ensuring that the members of one-quarter of the Canadian polity believe their interests are served by their country's fundamental law, and that the rest of the country has cared enough to take these interests into explicit, binding account.

Special attention is given in the Meech Lake Accord to the national characteristic of French and English-speaking minorities in Canada. This is of particular importance to the English-speaking community in Quebec.

The commitment of the federal and Quebec Governments to respect the linguistic characteristics of our community will, I

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believe, assure fairness and good will in the use of both official languages of Canada.

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UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO—DELAY IN DELIVERY OF CHEQUES

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, I wish to draw the attention of the House to a situation which I think is typical of how the Conservative Government of Canada is approaching services to the people of the country. It is dragging the level of service down to the lowest common denominator instead of trying to improve the situation.

I refer to the direct mail unit for the Canada Employment and Immigration Centre in Thunder Bay which services all of northwestern Ontario. Up until one week ago unemployment insurance cards were key-punched in Thunder Bay and sent electronically to the regional printing centre in Belleville. These cards were then back in the mail the next morning and were in the hands of legitimate UI recipients on Thursday at the earliest.

Thanks to this bureaucratic change those cards are now processed directly to Belleville, meaning great delays for the people of northwestern Ontario. People who normally would receive their cheques on a Thursday or a Friday are now having to wait over the weekend, if not longer, and the situation is getting worse.

I call this decision into question. I also call into question the Government's commitment to the local advisory councils which have strongly recommended against this change. But the Government has refused to listen to them.

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HUMAN RIGHTS

VISIT OF POLISH HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST, LESZEK MOCZULSKI

Mr. Andrew Witer (Parkdale—High Park): Mr. Speaker, Leszek Moczulski, a Polish Solidarity leader, is visiting Ottawa today. His credentials as a human rights activist are impressive and include the formation of the Movement for the Defence of Human and Civil Rights, as well as major contributions to freedom of expression through the underground press in Poland.

In 1980 Moczulski was arrested for his human rights activities and sentenced to seven years in prison. He was released in a general amnesty in 1984. He was then rearrested a year later, along with other Solidarity leaders.

While in prison Moczulski suffered three heart attacks, and following his release in 1986 he was allowed to travel to England for medical treatment. He has paid a high price in