

*Government Orders*

[*Translation*]

And new tremors emanated this summer from Oka and from the foothills of the Rockies. Over time, all of these stresses have loosened the ties that bind Confederation together. There is little time left before the next potential shock—the tabling in the Spring of Quebec's Bélanger-Campeau Commission report. Meanwhile we have lost much of the consensus we had on what kind of country Canada is—on what we all should be able to expect from our country and what we all should be prepared to do for our country. Attitudes shape decisions and decisions have consequences.

The patriation of the Constitution in 1982 without Quebec's endorsement has had serious consequences for the attachment of Quebecers to Canada. The collapse of the Meech Lake Accord, after it had been unanimously agreed to by all governments in Canada, has further weakened that attachment.

[*English*]

The failure of four First Ministers' Constitutional Conferences to resolve the issue of aboriginal self-government has provoked serious dissatisfaction very apparent across the country this last summer.

Economic policies that for decades protected central Canada at the expense of western Canada have had an important impact on the attitudes of western Canadians toward national institutions.

Atlantic Canadians have felt that their interests have too often trailed those of other parts of the country and frequently, in this particular perception as in many others, Atlantic Canadians were right.

A steady diet of often needlessly unproductive wrangling in the House of Commons and the regrettable spectacle that Canadians witnessed in the Senate last month are having dangerous effects on the credibility of our entire political process, as well as on the credibility of all people who participate in that process of any political party and from any region of the country.

Economic policies in recent decades, which gave Canadians much more than they paid for in taxes, are now having grave consequences. The bills are now coming in: a huge national debt, dependence on foreign borrowing, increased taxes, and cuts in government services as Canada struggles to pay the compound interest on large public borrowings when the federal government needs its economic strength.

Ottawa is striving to restore discipline to the fiscal situation of the nation. I think, irrespective of the government that might be here, that obligation would remain the same. More important, and the reason for its political implication, is that this financial status seriously inhibits the capacity of any federal government to use economic levers that might strengthen the federation, redress disparities or lessen the sense of grievance that individuals and communities and regions across Canada often and legitimately feel.

The challenge before all Canadians is simple. I exclude no one, certainly not myself, to have the clear headedness to learn these important lessons and the wisdom not to make the same mistakes again.

[*Translation*]

It is time we all did some real soul-searching. The future of Canada depends upon the answers to some very simple but very important questions. Do we all still want to live together? What kind of country do we want? Do Canadians still have common values and hopes and interests? Can Quebec, as the only predominantly French-speaking province in Canada, find cultural security and respect for its identity within our federal system?

[*English*]

Can the sense of western alienation be allayed by realistic and fundamental attitudinal changes elsewhere in the nation? In a country where all citizens are equal, how can the needs of the less populous regions and language minorities, and aboriginal peoples, be appropriately and perhaps permanently accommodated?

Does the present distribution of powers among federal and provincial and local governments still make sense in spite of the fact that many of them have been unchanged for 125 years, while the country and the world has undergone revolution after revolution? We have remained with many of the same powers that were imputed to one level of government or another.