

*Constitution Amendment, 1987*

If I speak out against the Accord today, it is not because I am against Quebec, as you surely know, but because I am for a stronger, not weaker Canada than the one we had known so far.

[English]

It seems to me that the important thing is how we organize ourselves as citizens in a large nation, and how we see ourselves in the mirror called the Constitution. We are a small population, geographically located next door to the most powerful nation. We live in a large geographical chunk called Canada. The fact that we are neighbours to the United States and not to Luxembourg, or the Republic of San Marino, requires a Constitution that adds strength and does not diminish strength in the role of the national Government, if we wish to compete successfully in the world instead of seeking special favours in Washington and retreating to the comfort of fortress America.

What happened to public participation in the process of this Accord? The Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) did not consult with Canadians when he negotiated the Accord. Eleven politicians decided for 25 million Canadians. The joint committee did not travel. Instead, it brought a handful of witnesses to Ottawa. Yet the committee had a responsibility to travel and consult Canadians on the Constitution. To make things worse, in July the Prime Minister announced that the Accord would not be changed, no matter what the committee recommended.

This week we are debating the Constitution of the people of Canada. Senator Murray told the committee at the outset that amendments to the Accord would not be accepted, and that the hearings were for public information only. What a sham! What a sad day for democracy! Is that the Progressive Conservative notion of democratic consultation?

This is the constitutional proposal of 11 individuals. The committee report did not produce one amendment, except for the Liberal proposals. In my submission, the 11-man vision of Canada expressed in Section 2 of the Accord is a rear-view mirror vision which may have been valid two generations ago. However, today a new Canada is emerging.

Canada includes many distinct societies: Quebec, Newfoundland, Haida Indians, New Brunswick, Ontario, Lubicon Indians, immigrant groups, the Dene Nation, Inuit, Mennonites, British Columbia, you name it, Madam Speaker, there are hundreds of distinct societies from coast to coast. In my submission, it is wrong to single out one distinct society in this constitutional Accord. Instead, we should constitutionalize what Canada is, a multicultural society, a nation composed of people from many different backgrounds.

Canada is not a nation where ethnics are over here and majorities are over there; not two founding races over here and aboriginal people over there; not the 10 provinces and the Prime Minister at one table cooking this up, and the two

northern territories left out, as mentioned by the Hon. Member for Yukon (Ms. McLaughlin).

Ethnicity and multiculturalism are not only the label for minorities. Majority groups are also ethnic and part of multiculturalism. Since ethnic and multicultural have become interchangeable words in the current political language, since Canada means people from many origins and cultures who joined the aboriginals, since the distinct character applies to many regions and people from Newfoundland to British Columbia, from the 49th parallel to the North Pole, it becomes imperative to amend Section 2, which is the description of our society.

When a decision is made on the present amendment before you, Madam Speaker, I intend to move an amendment to Section 2 which will state that the Constitution of Canada should be interpreted in the manner consistent with the recognition that Canada is a multicultural society which includes aboriginal peoples, French-speaking Canadians centred in Quebec but also present elsewhere in Canada, and English-speaking Canadians concentrated outside Quebec but also present in Quebec. In the amendment I intend to move, aboriginal people and new Canadians will not be added as an afterthought, which is probably what the Prime Minister and the Premiers did at 4.30 in the morning when they realized the political repercussions of their initial oversight.

In the amendment I intend to move, Canada is defined as one society, one distinct society because of its uniqueness in which there is no room for the potential emergence of two societies and eventually of two nations, in which there is no division between minority and majority groups, and no division between aboriginal and all other groups that compose Canadian society.

If not amended, the reasons I will vote against the Accord are the following. First, the definition of Canada proposed in the Accord is outdated. It is not the modern Canada. Millions of Canadians are left out who do not identify with either French or English. They have no place in the Accord, and they are outside the Constitution. Native people are an afterthought. This is not today's Canada.

• (1650)

Second, the spending power clause would lead to a checkerboard Canada and to the Balkanization of standards of social services, as it was so well put to the joint committee by several witnesses including the former Deputy Minister of the Treasury Board. Further, we want Ottawa to retain the power to stop provincial attempts to opt out in future as in the case of extra billing. The Accord encourages this option of opting out.

On the spending power, we do not want future federal Governments to be restrained when taking environmental initiatives. Third, there is the devolution of power to the provinces in the appointment to the Senate and the Supreme Court. As well, there is uncertainty about women's rights.