

*Government Orders*

realities. The problem, when you look at it, goes right back to the beginnings and the foundations of Canada.

Before Confederation there were essentially two Canadas, composed of two founding nations: the French of Lower Canada and the anglophones of Upper Canada. As this land grew and spread westward the perceptions of Canada evolved. The francophones of Quebec remained within the frame of reference of a Canada of two founding nations. The anglophones, the English-speaking Canadians, particularly western Canadians, began to perceive our land as an equal partnership of provinces and territories.

Canada today, as a result of that evolution of realities, has become a land, if you like, of two solitudes. It is a Canada of vastly different realities. That is why the Meech Lake Accord failed. It had essentially competing objectives and it was assisted by a Prime Minister who chose to roll the dice with the future of this nation. The demands of Quebec to be essentially a nation within a nation, with special privileges and powers, in the perception of western Canadians, of English Canadians, was unacceptable.

The application of the notwithstanding clause to impose French-only language rights within Quebec was the straw that broke the camel's back in western Canada. That is why western Canadians are now railing against the concept of bilingualism. The question they ask themselves is: why should English Canada be attempting to accommodate Quebec through a national bilingualism program when Quebec is trying to override equal rights within the province? That is the perception. It is the reality in terms of a western Canadian perspective. I want to try to bring that perspective here on behalf of western Canadians so that we can attempt to deal with this difficulty.

Quebecers, to present the other view, if they cannot follow their own perceived sovereign destiny within the national framework then they do not want to stay in Canada, they want to pursue their own future. To westerners, if they cannot have an equal partnership, then perhaps it is time that Quebec leaves. There are certain sentiments in the west which take that viewpoint. The reality is that we tread in very dangerous waters. It is a situation which threatens to rip our young nation apart.

The failure of Meech Lake last year has paralyzed this government and it paralyzed this nation. We do not have the kind of constitutional tools to deal with the kind of crisis which besets us today.

• (2220)

The current parliamentary structure is incapable of resolving this crisis. Canadians know that we as parliamentarians have in some measure failed them. There has been a clarion call for change in the way that this country runs itself.

There has been a request, a demand, for a mechanism to resolve this constitutional impasse.

One thing Meech Lake has taught us is that the Canadian people themselves are no longer willing to sit idly by on the sidelines while the process evolves behind closed doors. They want to be active. They want to take an active role, to be fundamentally involved with the process of solving this crisis, despite the anger and the frustration that is out there in Canada on both sides.

There is also, I feel, a growing desire to heal the wounds that have been left from the Meech Lake fiasco. There are genuine efforts coming about toward real national reconciliation.

I want to point to a small community in my riding, on the western edge of my riding in the Okanagan—Shuswap, the community of Falkland which is now becoming known internationally as “the little town that could”. This small community is trying to reach out to our francophone friends in Quebec with an “I care for Canada” campaign. The little town has been flying hundreds of flags. There are T-shirts. There are buttons. There are letter writing campaigns going on. Falkland has challenged other communities in my constituency and throughout the west to open up a dialogue with communities in French Canada and to tell our francophone friends, the brothers and sisters in Quebec, that we want them to stay. We want them to remain a part of Canada.

Other communities have taken up the challenge which Falkland has levelled. Falkland's sister city in Utah is even proudly flying our own Canadian flag and is taking up the challenge of the need for national unity in Canada. Falkland's message to Canada is that despite