

The Constitution

and we are all proud of it". I am proud of it and I am glad to represent the people of Red Deer.

[Translation]

Mr. Douglas Young (Acadie—Bathurst): Mr. Speaker, it is a great privilege for me today to act as the spokesman in this House for the Acadian men and women of New Brunswick who met to discuss about the Constitution.

Of course, everybody is asking for the protection and promotion of their rights, the recognition of their specificity and, for some, a distinct status. With full knowledge of the facts, we would be ill advised to question the expectations put forward by many organizations and communities. However, if there was ever a group whose claims deserved to be heard and to whom we should pay particular attention in this debate, it is the francophones living across Eastern Canada, including Newfoundland and Labrador. They are a minority in every Atlantic provinces, but their history, not to say the history of their survival, is an eloquent testimony of a people's will to be recognized and to take the place they deserve and which is theirs.

In 1849, in a speech he was delivering in Montreal, Louis-Joseph Papineau spoke of the Acadian as a vanished people. He was one of those who believed that the 1755 deportation had achieved its goal, that is to wipe out forever the presence of the descendants of the first French settlers in America. The former Quebec Premier, René Lévesque, also talked about francophones outside Quebec as "dead ducks". In 1991, a Quebec writer stated before the Bélanger-Campeau commission that francophones outside Quebec were only "warm corpses". These statements reflect the lack of knowledge of many persons on Acadia and its people; but mainly they underestimate the determination shown by this people.

Stirred by their will to survive as a people, despite their dissemination on a wide territory and the fact they had almost no rights in the last century, New Brunswick Acadians managed to maintain their culture, language and specificity. The institutional infrastructure they gave themselves is just as good as the infrastructure of any other linguistic minority in this country. Let me remind you, Mr. Speaker, of their fight to get education in their own language and religion, a fight that began with the

Caraquet riot in 1875 where Louis Mailloux died, becoming a symbol of those fierce battles.

What about the collective will they showed on the political front by succeeding in 1960 to elect as New Brunswick Premier one of their own, the hon. Louis J. Robichaud, whose program on equal opportunities allowed Acadians, men and women, to get at last their share of responsibilities in the daily management of provincial affairs and to get the benefits of a system that they did not before have access to?

The year 1963 marks the foundation of Moncton University, a university responsible for educating a very active and increasingly professional Acadian youth. The Mouvement coopératif acadien is also an example of collective success, with over 215,000 members and more than one billion dollars in assets.

• (2010)

In January 1992, the president, Mr. Raymond Gionet, said and I quote: "The Mouvement coopératif acadien wants Acadian men and women to achieve economic and social self-sufficiency by enhancing their quality of life and preserving their linguistic and cultural identity". A view I share, Mr. Speaker.

To stay in the business field, Assomption Vie has now become a pillar of an important financial group, the Groupe Assomption. Established in 1903 by Acadians deported to the United States, the Société Mutuelle l'Assomption always tends to promote the economic, social, and cultural development of Acadian communities. Several other groups play a key role in the development of Acadians, such as the Société des Acadiens et Acadiennes de Nouveau-Brunswick, the Fédération des Dames d'Acadie, the Société nationale des Acadiens, the Conseil économique du Nouveau-Brunswick, and so on.

So, you see, Acadian men and women in New Brunswick and throughout Atlantic Canada are far from being "dead ducks" or "*cadavres chauds*". They are dynamic Canadians who are willing and able to take part in the renewal of Canada. As they have showed in the past, they can significantly help the Canadian nation to develop and flourish.

However, I would like to add that the Acadian people I represent recognize the fact that the distribution of powers is severely unbalanced and that the structure and powers of some of our federal institutions are seriously