

Let me come to another area, and I will come back to the previous one. Let me come to the area of the Accord which stipulates that Canada must provide reasonable compensation to any province which rather than participate in a future national shared-cost program chooses to establish its own program "compatible" with national objectives. I have had great difficulty in trying to define and to distinguish as to what "initiative" means, what "compatible" means, what "national objectives" mean.

Who is to set the national objectives? Like all Members of this Chamber, I thought that the Parliament of Canada was the place where national objectives would be debated and discussed. That does not preclude consultations with provincial Governments—not at all. But what are we doing with regard to this particular amendment to the Constitution? Why have we not as a nation spelled out as to who will set the national objectives?

One may say, "Well, we understand that it will be the Parliament of Canada". Well, if one understands it to be the Parliament of Canada, then it should state that. I quote to you, Madam Speaker, some words which were used by a provincial colleague of mine in June of 1984. I refer to the words of the former Minister of Education who is now the Attorney General of Nova Scotia. This is what he had to say about national objectives. At that time he was the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Education. He said this: "Given that provincial jurisdiction in the field of education, provincial Ministers of Education would contend that national purposes can only be understood in terms of provincial purposes".

Where is the role for national objectives? Where is the role for Parliament to set those national objectives? Some, if they wish to be politically mischievous would say: "Oh, you are just bashing the provinces". I am not bashing the provinces at all. This is a democratic institution which covers the geographical mass of our country. This is the rock of democracy in Canada. Surely, this rock of democracy ought to have in its Constitution that the national objectives affecting nationhood should be decided by the Parliament of Canada. As you know, Madam Speaker, there is a major omission within the Accord that does not stipulate that.

I have grave difficulties, some historical in their context, when someone tries to weaken a national Government and give more powers to provincial Governments. That is not to suggest in any suspicious way that they will do evil things. That is not my intention. But history will tell us, at least in my province, and for those provinces on the peripheral regions of this country, that the biggest ace was a strong national central Government. Our history tells us that. For those who argue that because Parliament has given up more duties and responsibilities to the provincial Governments that there will not be any effect, I think that is being somewhat, maybe, intellectually dishonest, but certainly naive at best, because we need a strong central Government. The poorer regions of the country more so than others need a strong central Government.

### *Constitution Amendment, 1987*

I made reference to the phrase "distinct society". The Minister of Federal-Provincial Relations said it does not mean anything. The Premier of Quebec has a different view, a very different view. He said this in the National Assembly on June 18, "First of all, we note that with the recognition of a distinct society we are achieving a major gain, and one that is not merely symbolic, because the country's entire Constitution will from now on have to be interpreted to reflect this recognition. The French language constitutes one fundamental characteristic of our uniqueness but it has other aspects such as our cultural, our political, economic and legal institutions. As we have so often said, we did not want to define all these aspects, precisely because we wanted to avoid reducing the National Assembly's role in promoting Quebec's uniqueness". It goes on for several other sentences, which I am sure most Members have read.

So we have the federal Government saying it does not mean anything but yet we have, and rightly so, legitimate, admirable men and women in different parts of Canada saying that it does mean something. I take offence, great offence, that the federal Government will not stand in its place and spell out what it believes distinct society means. If it does not mean anything, then come out and say that, be honest with the people of the Province of Quebec, never mind playing these games.

The Minister of Federal-Provincial Relations said, and quite rightly, that on the distribution of powers there is no change in the listing of those powers from provinces to the federal Government. But what he did not say is what effect that will have on the peace, order and good government clause, which is not in the Constitution *per se* but is done through the common law, through judicial interpretation. That is where it is done. Many constitutional lawyers will tell us that it does have an effect.

I would have hoped that the Government of Canada would have been a little bit clearer for me, and for Canadians generally speaking, on that particular point. If it means something, then spell it out as to what it means, never mind trying to camouflage it. In my view it is not symbolic; it is a substantive phrase. It is no longer in the preamble of the Constitution; it is in the body of the Constitution. That is a major distinction in itself. People can argue against it saying that it does not really mean anything; it is just the acknowledgement of an historical fact.

Who is any more distinctive than the people of Newfoundland? Who is any more distinctive than the people of Cape Breton Island, in terms of their history? This has the potential, I believe, if not spelled out clearly by the Government as to what it means, to be very confusing and very frustrating. In the years to come the judicial interpretation may go well beyond the good intentions of those individuals who consummated what they thought, in good conscience, was a good deal for Canada. But there are other major concerns that I have.