

The Constitution

turn helps make all our country so different and, I would say, so much richer than our neighbour. Rather than erasing differences, let us benefit from our rich cultural heritage and continue to make this a caring, humane, understanding, and tolerant society, a model for all the world to admire and follow.

[*Translation*]

I agree that the Meech Lake Accord is not perfect. But it can be seen as an extremely important step in the process begun with the Constitutional Agreement of 1982. This step should make it possible for Quebec to adhere fully to the Canadian Constitution and for the Constitutional process to continue its development and adapt to the constantly changing conditions in both Canadian society and the outside world.

[*English*]

As Sir Wilfrid Laurier put it: "We are divided into provinces, we are divided into races, and out of these confused elements it is not always the ideal policy from the point of view of pure idealism which ought to prevail but the policy which can appeal on the whole, to all sections of the community".

Canada is a nation of diversity and compromise. This, some might argue, is its weakness. I say that it is its strength.

[*Translation*]

Personally, I rely on Canadians and trust in the good faith and generosity of the provincial Governments and the Members of this House for many, many years to come. On the basis of common sense, I am willing to wager that Canadian unity will be better served if we respect regional differences and if one level of Government does not try to impose its will on the other.

I, for one, feel that Canada is an arrangement which expresses the will of Canadians to live together. It is also a balancing act which has to be corrected every day and which needs constant protection and adjustment to new conditions. Historian Michel Brunet was right when he said that "All Canadian anti-federalists make the mistake of ignoring the past. If Canada is a difficult country to govern, it is not because it is a federal state; it has developed federal institutions because it is a difficult country to govern."

It is this balancing act which makes it possible for our federal state to adapt its institutions to the needs of the francophone minority today, and later on to the needs and interests of the various Canadian provinces.

[*English*]

I have only a minute remaining in which to finish my speech. May I have the unanimous consent of the House to continue?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kempling): Does the Hon. Member have unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Garneau: Mr. Speaker, as a newspaper reporter said, the Meech Lake Agreement is neither a miracle nor a mirage but, in my opinion, it is an opportunity. The Agreement includes elements of the resolution passed by the Liberal Party of Canada during its November Convention. There are differences though. Our resolution was more comprehensive than the Meech Lake Accord and I too would have liked to see more provisions included. We have this opportunity today because provincial Premiers and the Prime Minister of Canada have tried to meet, as we have tried to do it on this side of the House, the concerns of the Province of Quebec and the demands made by its Premier, Mr. Robert Bourassa. Mr. Bourassa's demands have not come out of a hat. They have been the subject of extensive consultations and have led to the election of that Government in December, 1985. Thanks to the provincial Premiers who tried to act in a positive manner and to the Liberal Party of Canada who tried to make a positive move in its November Convention, it is possible today to have a debate on the Meech Lake Agreement. I think this is an important step. Federalist as he may be, Mr. Bourassa strongly believes that Canadian unity will be best served if the fundamental law of this country recognizes the distinct identity of Quebec whereby its society is entitled to some guarantees in terms of immigration and development of federal institutions in this country.

[*English*]

The Meech Lake Accord, as I said, represents for me an opportunity which was in no small part assisted by the resolution passed by the Liberal Party of Canada at its November, 1986, convention. I am proud to be part of this House and to share this moment with my colleagues in all political Parties. I believe that the Meech Lake Accord is certainly following the right path, a path for a renewed and united Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to live in this House a very important event for Quebec, an event that transcends Party lines because I think that Quebec's adherence to Canada is for us on this side of the House both a rational and emotional issue. We have worked hard. My colleagues under the Trudeau Government have worked hard to reach that goal. Unfortunately, the political situation in Quebec at the time did not allow them to make that step. Today, we have a Conservative Government, but I will not indulge in partisanship and will not deny the speeches I made in the Quebec National Assembly, during the campaign of 1984 as well as within my Party because the solution in which I believe has been introduced by a Conservative Government.

[*English*]

Mr. Finestone: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for the depth of his emotion and the thoughtfulness of his address. I would agree and concur that we are all delighted