

*Government Orders*

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

• (1540)

**Mr. Mulroney:** Mr. Speaker, I understand that that debate was not unanimous, which is a sort of break with the tradition we have known here for a number of years in the House. Every Parliament since Confederation has had to confront the question of Canada's linguistic duality. The members of every Parliament have had to stand up and declare themselves on this very fundamental issue.

These debates are in fact sometimes painful and divisive. But they have also given this country some of its finest moments in this the highest court of the land.

[*Translation*]

In 1969, the Hon. Robert Stanfield and the late David Lewis stood with Prime Minister Trudeau on the Official Languages Act; in 1973, they did so again, on a resolution of this House reaffirming linguistic duality.

In 1983 and 1984, Mr. Broadbent and I, together with the Trudeau government, supported the rights of the francophone minority in Manitoba when the Prime Minister of Canada presented a similar motion to this House.

In 1987, Mr. Turner and Mr. Broadbent stood with me in support of the Meech Lake Accord. In 1988, they did so again in passing Bill C-72, the new Official Languages Act.

It is in this spirit of co-operation that I have the honour to present this resolution before the House today for your consideration and for a debate which will no doubt be true to the great traditions of our Parliament on the most burning current issues, as in decades past.

[*English*]

It is time for all of us to stand up for Canada again because in recent days we have witnessed regrettable denials of some of Canada's fundamental values. Debate over language has been almost as frequent and fundamental a characteristic as the history of Canada's duality itself. But, with tolerance and respect for one another, we have built a country that has not simply acknowledged its own diversity but thrived on it.

Confederation was the coming together of English and French-speaking Canadians whom Wilfrid Laurier was

later to characterize as the "marble and the oak" of this remarkable home that we now call Canada.

The Fathers of Confederation never suggested in 1867 that building a country in which English and French would both be spoken would in any way or at any time be easy. In fact, they often referred to the difficulties that they knew awaited successive generations of Canadians. They called upon them even then for the foresight, the openness and the tolerance that would be required to bring this great Canadian experiment forward and to enrich it generation after generation. They also understood that this was a fundamental characteristic of the new nation that they were building for a people searching for a new home from countries around the world.

Sir John A. Macdonald said in the Confederation debates in respect of the concept of duality, to paraphrase him in that particular debate in February 1865, 125 years ago just about today, he acknowledged that the easiest and the most efficient way to run Canada would be with a unitary state with one language. He acknowledged that that brought with it great advantages. But as he indicated, the only problem with it is that it would not work. If you adopted that view, there would be no Canada because, as he said, "any proposition which involved the absorption of the individuality of Lower Canada, Quebec at the time, would not be received with favour by her people".

In 1865 he was speaking of the notion of individuality of Lower Canada. Today, the same fundamental meaning finds usage in the word "distinct". It is as true today as it was when Sir John A. Macdonald and Etienne Cartier began the nation-building work of binding this country together with their own hands.

That duality was something that just did not happen. It was acknowledged, reflected upon and deemed by everyone involved as absolutely indispensable, not only to the functioning of Canada, but to the existence of Canada. Macdonald acknowledged time and time again that Canada could not come together without a fundamental acknowledgement of that linguistic duality.

That duality was enriched and strengthened over decades by wave after wave of immigrants from eastern Europe, central Europe and elsewhere, who caused the prairies to bloom and the sovereignty of Canada to extend to the farthest reaches of this continent. It is a safe statement to make today when I say that if Canada as we know it was begun essentially by Scottish Protestants from Ontario and French Catholics from Quebec,