

Let me turn now to national unity and begin with a quote from Gordon Robertson, former Clerk of the Privy Council and chief constitutional advisor to Prime Ministers Pearson and Trudeau. Mr. Robertson recently said:

"A great many people in English-speaking Canada did not understand the importance to Quebec of the Meech Lake Accord. They were misled into thinking that it could be rejected and life would go on as before."

Well, no one in Newfoundland should have thought this.

In that fateful week last June, the Prime Minister, the Premier of Ontario, the Premier of Saskatchewan and the Premier of New Brunswick all spoke in the House of Assembly to make clear just how much Canada's unity would be threatened if Newfoundland maintained its recession of the Accord. Well, here we are, right where we were told we would be.

As Richard Cashin recently said:

"Once Meech Lake went down the tubes, there was no question that Quebec would have to take another look at the issue of sovereignty."

And, as Fraser March recently said:

"What [the Meech Lake Accord] would have done is given us another 20 years of at least discussion, kept us glued together."

That is what would have been. As things stand now, time is short.

And, change is needed. As Liberal Leader Jean Chretien has said:

"Politically... the status quo is not the solution for Quebec, nor for Canada as a whole.... It is easier to reject the non-solutions -- independence and the status quo -- than to define exactly what reforms will meet the needs of Canadians and the economic, social and cultural challenges of the modern world."

NDP Leader Audrey McLaughlin said much the same last year:

"It isn't going to be the status quo. That's clear. That's the reality. It's what we can work out with Quebec."