

*The Constitution*

not perfect, they are infinitely better than the protection for women in, for example, the American constitution.

In addition, the charter specifically prohibits discrimination against those with physical or mental disabilities. This is a great achievement which makes Canada a world leader in the International Year of the Disabled. Much credit should be given to the hon. member for Don Valley East (Mr. Smith) and to other members of the Special Committee on the Disabled and the Handicapped.

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

**Mr. Chrétien:** Fifth, the charter deals with language rights and I will speak to this in a few minutes.

Finally, the charter makes specific reference to the multicultural nature of our society. At the time of confederation, our forefathers established a new country based on two great cultures, the English and the French. Over the last 114 years, Canada has been enriched by the contribution of immigrants from the four corners of the earth. Because Canada prides itself on not being a melting pot, we are establishing today that the charter "shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians". As far as the government is concerned, the multicultural heritage of Canadians is such an important fabric of our nation that it must be reflected in our Constitution.

● (1230)

*[Translation]*

I want to speak now to my fellow Quebecers, and I want to tell them that it is essential to distinguish between the interests of Quebec and the interests of the parti Québécois. The people of Quebec, whenever they have been asked to choose, have always come out clearly for Canada, and so we have chosen to listen to those who ran as federalists and were elected to serve Quebec in this house as opposed to those members of the government of Quebec who act as separatists after they are elected, but who can only get elected when they promise not to bring about separation during their mandate.

I want to say that I regret very much that Premier Lévesque agreed to give up the Quebec veto. The loss of the veto is not recuperable, but the interests of Quebec have been protected in this resolution by the work of the 74 federal liberal members in this house and by the constructive suggestions of the Leader of the Quebec Liberal Party.

What then does the resolution do to protect the duality of Canada? First, it guarantees in the Constitution the rights of francophones to schools in the nine English-speaking provinces. This is extremely important as a protection for our minorities who for generations have fought for their rights. But it is equally important for the thousands of francophone Quebecers who each year since the Parti Québécois has come to power have moved to other parts of Canada.

Second, the resolution guarantees the rights of English-speaking Canadians to educate their children in English in Quebec. This merely enshrines in the constitution what Quebec has done of its own free will for over one hundred years. Even if the Parti Québécois opposes this constitutional guarantee being extended to the anglophone minority, the great majority of Quebecers see it as fair and just. Quebecers have never wanted to abuse the rights of the anglophone minority, and I believe that today, now that we have finally obtained education rights for francophone minorities in the nine other provinces, they will agree that it is only fair and just that we should do the same for the anglophone minority in Quebec, as we have been doing for that part 114 years.

Third, the resolution provides that where Quebec opts out of a constitutional amendment giving power to Ottawa in matters of education or other cultural matters, fiscal compensation will be paid. This was suggested by Mr. Ryan and was subsequently supported and imposed on Cabinet by the Quebec caucus.

Fourth, the resolution guarantees bilingualism at the federal level in the Parliament of Canada, in the institutions of the federal government, and in the services of the federal government. Here, I wish to point out that the manner in which bilingualism is to be entrenched in the Constitution in the future ensures that even a majority of this Parliament and of all the other provinces will not be enough to change this provision without the consent of the Province of Quebec. In fact, we have given Quebec a veto in this respect.

We have been accused of betraying Quebec, of threatening the French language, of taking away Quebec's ability to control its own economy. If there has been a betrayal, the guilty one is René Lévesque for giving up the veto. Nothing in the resolution threatens the French language. Instead the resolution strengthens French across Canada. In Quebec, it does nothing to affect the provisions of Bill 101 with respect to the language of work, the language of the professions, or other matters relating to French as the official language of Quebec. As far as the economy is concerned, the resolution cannot be blamed for Mr. Parizeau's last budget.

As Quebecers we must choose between the objectives of the Parti Québécois and the challenge of belonging to a country that spans a continent. As for me, I adopt the words of Laurier:

"We are French Canadians, but our country is not confined to the territory over-shadowed by the Citadel of Quebec; our country is Canada; it is the fertile lands bordered by the Bay of Fundy, the Valley of the St. Lawrence, the regions of the Great Lakes, the Prairies of the West, the Rocky Mountains, the lands washed by the famous ocean where breezes are said to be as sweet as the breezes of the Mediterranean, our fellow-countrymen are not only those in whose veins runs the blood of France.

They are all those, whatever their race or whatever their language, whom the fortunes of war, the chances of fate, or their own choice have brought among us. As far as I am concerned, those are my fellow countrymen. I am a Canadian. The rights of my fellow countrymen of different origins are as dear to me, as sacred to me, as the rights of my own race. What I claim for us is an equal place