

DION

(continued from page 1)

now prevails in Quebec, and on which there is a consensus, with the support of 85 per cent of Quebecers, according to polls.

Quebec's language laws are more liberal than those in such irreproachable multilingual democracies as Switzerland or Belgium. Radical elements sometimes try to reignite linguistic tensions in Quebec, but they always fail. The solidarity between Quebec's Francophones and non-Francophones is admirable. Indeed, there is only one issue that can divide them along linguistic and ethnic lines: the issue of secession.

The failure of constitutional reforms in recent years, which aimed, among other things, to have Quebec recognized as a distinct society within the federation, unfortunately created an utterly deplorable feeling of mutual rejection among too many Quebecers and other Canadians.

The truth is that the vast majority of Canadians want to recognize and celebrate as a fundamental characteristic of their country the fact that one of Canada's 10 provinces, the second largest, has a francophone majority, in an overwhelmingly anglophone North America.

Thus, a poll in March 1996 showed that 85 per cent of Quebecers and 68 per cent of other Canadians believed that "the Canadian Constitution should recognize that Quebec, while equal to the other provinces, is different, particularly due to its French language and culture." As well, 82 per cent of Quebecers and 84 per cent of other Canadians felt that "Quebec is an essential component of the Canadian identity...."

The terrible misunderstanding surrounding recognition of Quebec's distinctiveness has convinced too many Quebecers and other Canadians that their values are incompatible.... In fact, the very opposite is true....

Those universal values of tolerance and solidarity in diversity have taken root in Canada in large part because French and English people have had to learn to live together, which has prepared them to welcome new fellow citizens from all corners of the globe....

Canadians' spirit of tolerance has led them to understand, perhaps better than any other people, that equality is not synonymous with uniformity. It is that understanding that has guided them in putting in place a decentralized federa-

tion that is always striving for a balance between solidarity among all and respect for the differences of each....

The secessionist leaders claim that Canada is a centralized federation that leaves Quebec too little autonomy. They say our federation is rigid and incapable of evolving, and describe the federal government as a sort of foreign power in relation to Quebecers.

The truth is that one of our greatest strengths is precisely that our federation is based on decentralization. Experts in comparative federalism rank it among the most decentralized, alongside Switzerland. As a Canadian province, Quebec enjoys an enviable level of autonomy compared with the components of other federations. The flexibility of Canadian federalism has also meant that Quebec is differentiated from the other provinces through specific provisions in a variety of areas, including civil law, taxation, international relations, the pension plan, social policy, postsecondary education and immigration....

Our country deserves to survive, and its chances of succeeding are excellent. Quebecers and other Canadians will stay together because we have achieved something irreplaceable in the world. We can be proud of our linguistic and cultural harmony, our economic success and the uniqueness of our institutions. We can recognize, in complete confidence, Quebec's distinctiveness as a fundamental characteristic of our country....

I would like to conclude with a quotation from President Clinton, which I feel sums up the essence of what I wanted to say to you today: "In a world darkened by ethnic conflicts that literally tear nations apart, Canada has stood for all of us as a model of how people of different cultures can live and work together in peace, prosperity and understanding."

HOCKEY TRIBUTE IN WASHINGTON

The Canadian Embassy is celebrating Canada's national sport this fall with an exhibition of artifacts and memorabilia from the Hockey Hall of Fame in Toronto and a fine arts collection of paintings and prints.

The exhibition, *They shoot...they score! Ils lancent...et comptent!*, opened on October 3 and runs through January 31, 1997. Featured attractions include trophies; vintage and recent photographs; a display of jerseys, masks, pads and gloves worn by hockey greats since 1928; and a film, *Hockey Dreams*, that intersperses historical footage with scenes of a young boy and his grandfather at the Montreal Forum.

The fine arts exhibit, curated by Marie Devaney Mahovlich, includes a 1984 silkscreen of Wayne Gretsky by Andy Warhol, paintings by Ken Danby and Charles Pachter, and a sculpture of Henri Richard by Joe Fafard.

The Hockey Hall of Fame, formed in 1961, elects up to three players, builders or referees a year on the basis of ability, integrity, character and contributions to the team and the game. It now has 304 members. The organization maintains a permanent exhibit at its Toronto headquarters.

It is unclear precisely when the first stick game was played on ice, perhaps in the mid-1800s by British soldiers garrisoned in Halifax, but Canada quickly embraced the sport and has developed and refined it. The first public game in an indoor rink was played in Montreal in 1875, with rules compiled by a McGill University student. Governor General

Ambassador to Help Defuse Crisis in Zaire

Canada's Ambassador to the U.S., Raymond Chrétien, has been appointed by U.N. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali as Special Envoy to the Great Lakes region of Africa. Fighting between the Zairian military and ethnic Tutsis has driven half a million refugees from camps in eastern Zaire, and it is feared that Rwanda and Burundi could be drawn into the conflict. Ambassador Chrétien will travel to the region in November to assess the crisis and will make recommendations by December 15 for a U.N. response. He served as Ambassador to Zaire from 1978 to 1981, with joint accreditation to Rwanda, Burundi and the Congo Republic.