

*The Constitution**[Translation]*

For his part, Senator Tremblay stated: "I would just like to say that for once I am pleased with a government proposal, without any reservation".

[English]

I was glad to see the nods of agreement of members of the official opposition when I indicated that they agreed with section 34 of the resolution.

The importance of the equalization transfers varies from one receiving province to another, but with the exception of Saskatchewan, it represents a large share of total provincial revenue. This share is around 25 per cent in the Atlantic provinces; more than 15 per cent in Manitoba; more than 10 per cent in Quebec; around 2 per cent in Saskatchewan.

So, we ask the question: Why are these rights necessary? I am referring to both language rights and equalization. They are necessary; first to maintain and enhance the special character of Canada; second, to guarantee that no Canadian who finds himself in a minority position will become a second-class citizen, and they are necessary in New Brunswick, for example, to ensure that Acadians have the same rights, privileges and opportunities as the rest of us. They are necessary to ensure that the valiant struggle of our Acadian brothers and sisters over more than two centuries, will not have been in vain.

[Translation]

● (1850)

For two centuries, the Acadians had to fight for their rights, especially for the right to be educated in French. For example, they had difficulty finding text books in French. That was the situation up to recently and it certainly was not acceptable. With this charter they will have the right to be educated in their mother tongue without having to experience the adverse conditions of the past.

[English]

The basis for this solution lies in this charter but it is not in and of itself, the solution. The real solution lies in education and job opportunities, in the sense of justice and fairness of those, like me, who belong to the linguistic majority. In vain shall they struggle if we pay only lip service to principles. In vain shall we all struggle if dedication to principles is not translated into determination for action to eradicate economic disparity and to promote—with our money as well as our mouths—equality of opportunity. For as long as an Acadian must learn English to find employment, so long shall he be chained. For as long as he must move from an Acadian community to find a job in Fredericton or Saint John or even Moncton, so long shall he and his children be assimilated, just as surely as if he had moved to the U.S.A.

I commend the government and the Premier of New Brunswick for the right decision they have made on linguistic and minority rights. I regret that the government and Premier of Ontario do not have the same sense of justice. But espousing principles is not enough. I now call upon the government and

the Premier of New Brunswick to ensure that those areas of New Brunswick where the minority lives will receive a fair share of the economic activity and growth of the province. And I pledge myself anew to that goal and to work for its achievement.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to say how happy I am that native and aboriginal rights will be enshrined. Our past treatment of our original peoples is perhaps our greatest national shame. We must endeavour to eradicate that shame and restore their pride and sense of worth, because in a very real sense they did not lose these characteristics, we have destroyed them. Our paternalism was never justifiable and can no longer be tolerated. Our past insensitivity and arrogance must end now. I want to live to see the day when our Indians, Inuit, and Métis will once again be able to proclaim their pride of citizenship and sense of human worth and dignity in this great land of ours.

Let us look at the positive side of this Constitution as far as this country is concerned. All great and united countries have their own constitution. It is the guiding light of all true democratic nations.

The opposition and certain provinces have been saying that our attempt, as a government, at patriation is creating disunity. They must realize that it is their negativism toward the resolution and personal attacks on the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) that are causing disunity in our country. I hope they will forget partisanship and join with us in making this a glorious event for Canada; a unifying force.

It is time for Canadians to stand up and say they are Canadians first—not westerners first, not Quebecers first, not Acadians first, not British subjects first, but rather Canadians with a rich heritage—Canadians first. The Constitution will go a long way to ensure this; it is the real key to national unity in Canada.

And so, Mr. Speaker, let us here resolve to get on with the task; to end the acrimony and division so that, in a spirit of brotherhood, and with the help of divine providence, we may achieve our natural potential to become the greatest, the freest nation on earth, and the model by which all others will have to judge themselves. If we have that resolve, that determination, then in the words of Tennyson, "Some work of noble note, may yet be done."

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Order, please. I want to recognize the hon. member for Simcoe North (Mr. Lewis) but, before I do so, I have to confess that unfortunately the Chair made a mess on its own doorstep and has to clear it up.

During the last few moments I have reviewed the statement I made earlier about the rights of hon. members to continue their access to the floor and debate if there has been some time intervening beyond the normal hour for rising at dinner or at ten o'clock. There is not even a vestige of a doubt; it would not be possible for me to have been more wrong than I was. Consequently, by the process of rubbing both digits of my I.Q.