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Speaker: Honourable Thomas Lush

The House met at 10:00 a.m.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Decker: Mr. Speaker, last night before my time ran out, I adjourned the debate, I started to describe in a brief outline some of the feelings I had in the ongoing process of making up my mind on how to vote on this thing. I made the point that last Sunday, or Monday, a week ago, I had some inclination to vote for the Accord, and I arrived at this conclusion: The conclusion was that I would hold my nose and vote for. The reason I came to that conclusion was because I had some fear for my constituents, because I realized that after June 23rd, the Newfoundland Government would still have to deal with the Federal Government. And although I would like to think that we are dealing with principle here, we are dealing with the rights of people, a province to stand up for what it believes in, yet, being somewhat of a pragmatist, having some knowledge of interpersonal relations, I was nervous that the Federal Government could wreck vengeance on the Provincial Government.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is a very real concern. I would certainly hope that no person, or no persons, would ever stoop to such a level, but human nature, knowing what it is, there is always the danger that this kind of game could be played. So I was worried about what would happen to the Province, and I also was worried very much about the implication if some war was waged against Newfoundland for voting against this Accord; I was concerned about what the implications of that

would be for the constituents in my District, in the Strait of Belle Isle.

I know how important it is for this Province to have a secondary roads agreement with Ottawa. I live in a district where 300 kilometers of the roads are still unpaved. And if we have to wait until the Province can afford to pave these roads, it will take us years and years and years to do this. So we have to have a federal/provincial agreement. And I would be a little nervous about standing on principle if it meant that the roads in my district would not be paved for another 20 years.

I know that many springs we have the bays and the harbours in my district filled with ice and the fishermen cannot get out to fish, and we have to go to Ottawa and ask to have Unemployment Insurance extended. Now there should not be any connection between the Meech Lake Accord and whether or not you are going to try to stop a fisherman from making a living, by extending the safety net for a week or two. That should not come into the play, but there is always that question mark, Mr. Speaker, there is always that question mark, so before I was prepared to say I am going to vote against this Accord, I wanted to consult with my constituents and bring some of these matters to their attention, so I went through the exercise last week as most honourable members did, I went back to the district to talk to some of the constituents.

I did not cover my complete district. There are thirty-five communities in the district which I represent. I only went to one area. The message I got was loud

and clear. But, Mr. Speaker, I understand the Newfoundland way of life and all of us don't normally want to provoke a fight, so people who talk to me, generally assume by the positions that we have taken in the past, that I am against the Accord.

My friend from Kilbride spoke last night and I would think, and this is not being unkind to my friend, I would think that people who talked to my friend from Kilbride would assume that he was for the Accord, and people are not going to come up and take us on, not out of the blue. Generally, they will tell you what you want to hear, not 100 per cent, but there is a certain amount of that. I met a certain amount of that and I believe people were telling me what they thought I wanted to hear.

To avoid this, I commissioned a scientific poll done by a polling company in the city of St. John's, and over the weekend, over the last three or four days they polled - I think it was 1,000 phone calls they made. I don't have the actual formal presentation but I will have it today, Mr. Speaker, but if anyone doubts what I am saying, I am prepared to table it. The results are this, 66 per cent of the people in the Strait of Belle Isle district are asking that I vote against the Meech Lake Accord. Now, that figure, I would have thought would have been a bit higher, but the figure which surprised me, was, the people who said vote for, that number is 12 per cent. 12 per cent said 'vote for' and 22 per cent were undecided.

So, the poll is saying to me that I should vote against this Accord, but even though the people of my

district are saying to me vote against, I know the fickleness of the electorate.

Even if people demand that I do something, if they demand that I vote for or against, if a week or two or three, or a month after I vote against, and if this thing is defeated, and if the interest rates still continue to rise, and I believe they will. If we still have some economic problems in this nation, and I still believe we will, whether we vote for or whether we vote against, I think we are going to have some economic problems over the next few months.

And if we could somehow - if some politician or some group, could somehow tie what is happening in the economy of the nation, to the fact that Newfoundland turned down this Atlantic Accord, if someone could tie that, my constituents would turn on me, Mr. Speaker, just as fast as you could blink an eye. Even though they are telling me loud and clear to vote against the Meech Lake Accord, even though they are telling me that, they would turn on me just as fast as they turned on Sir Richard Squires, Smallwood, or Peckford. This is the way it is with the electorate. So in the end, Mr. Speaker, even though they are telling me to vote against; in the end it has to be my decision. I will be held responsible, not because the constituents say do this, I will be held responsible for the results whether they are good or bad.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Decker: So I have gone through the same reflection period that many of my colleagues have gone through. I have examined the document, listened to various

speeches, listened to the two Premiers we had here yesterday. I have listened to some of the speeches that our own Premier has made over the months past. Mr. Speaker, if I thought for a minute that my vote against Meech would bring some long term harm on this nation, I would vote for it. I would not even take a second thought.

But I am not sure whether or not a vote for or against is going to have some long-term effect on the nation. And I have not yet received any implication that it will. I have opinions from Mr. McKenna yesterday, who seems to think it will have some long-term impact on the Nation. I have the word from Premier Peterson who tells us not to vote out of fear. So it is difficult to make up your mind if you are going to bear in mind the implication on the Nation, because I do not really know. My gut feeling is that the Nation will go on after June 23. I think the interest rates will still climb up. I think there still will be a tremendous strain on the dollar. But that same landmass of Canada will be there, I believe you will still have the separatist element in Quebec, Mr. Speaker. That element has been there for quite some number of years now.

My concern from the point of view of the Nation is that someone, somewhere, someday is going to have to take on this separatist element which is in the Nation. Now ideally I would like for someone on the Federal level to take on that separatist element, and I believe Prime Minister Trudeau did an excellent job of taking on that separatist element some years ago. But it seems today that it has gotten down to

the position where Newfoundland, the youngest province in Confederation, one of the smallest provinces, and probably one of the poorest provinces in the Nation, we are left to take on this separatist element in Canada. I am not taking on the average Quebecer. Since I have been elected the Minister of Health I have had the opportunity to attend one Health Minister's Conference in Quebec, and I was impressed with the ordinary people that I met, the few that I did meet. Certainly impressed with the previous Minister of Health before the election, as a woman for whom I had a tremendous amount of respect and I understand she was respected by all the Health Ministers across the nation.

I sort of feel discouraged when Premier McKenna says that the people in Quebec are misunderstanding our intentions and they feel that somehow the English Canadians are turning against them. I do not believe for a minute that it is the intent of English Canadians to have any bad feelings against the ordinary Quebecer, the ordinary Francophone, so what do you do?

If your actions are being misinterpreted do you try to change your actions or do you try to change the interpretation of your actions? It is unfortunate that they feel that way, but, Mr. Speaker, I have no sympathy whatsoever for the separatist element, whether it be in Quebec, in Newfoundland, British Columbia, or wherever it is. They are nation tearer-downers and I have no concern for that. It seems to me that a lot of the pressure which is coming to have this particular document passed is coming from the separatist

element. They no longer have a separatist government in Quebec but the separatists in Quebec still have a tremendous influence on the Government, and on the Federal Government, and on the nation as a whole.

Mr. Speaker: We remind the press that there are no cameras from the sides.

Please, carry on.

Mr. Decker: So, Mr. Speaker, I think what I am saying is this Meech Lake Accord which we are being asked to vote on, based on pure principles, I am opposed to it. Being a pragmatist I can see that we might just be punished over the short-term if we were to vote against, and I feel cheated that we, the smallest Province in the nation are the ones who have to take on the separatist element in the nation. At this moment I feel that the proper and right thing for me to do is vote against. Premier Peterson says if your only inclination to vote would be based on fear do not vote for it, so my inclination at the moment is to stand on principle, to do what I believe is right and to vote against the Accord. I suppose, Mr. Speaker, in the end that just might be what I will do, but we have two more speakers coming from outside the Province. We have the Prime Minister coming today and I understand, the Premier for Saskatchewan, who is going to address us and who knows we may have other people. There are still a lot of other speakers in this House who are going to express themselves, so being a person who does not have a closed mind, and does not want to be accused of having a closed mind, I am going to listen to all the speeches which are going to be

made later and who knows, maybe some of them will just allow me to have the same experience that Saul had on the road to Damascus, and some blinding light should show me something I have not seen before, and I might end up voting for it.

So, Mr. Speaker, tomorrow my picture will not be in the telegram saying that I am for it, or against it, because the arguments are not all in, the jury is not back in, but I will make up my mind when the time comes to vote.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing the hon. Member for Carbonear, I just want to remind hon. members of the agreement that we entered into with respect to the length of speeches. It was my understanding we would take twenty minutes. If, for some reason, a member could not complete his speech in twenty minutes, he would then try to do it within the half hour.

A couple of members yesterday exceeded that rather excessively, so I am reminding hon. members today that the agreement is twenty minutes. If we can do it in less than twenty, of course, nobody would be upset, but once we get over the twenty we would certainly want hon. members to try and restrain themselves and to keep what they have to say within the thirty minutes.

The hon. the Member for Carbonear.

Mr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, for the past three or four days, I guess, listening to my constituents, and I did listen to a great number of them, and as of yesterday afternoon I had my mind made up on the Meech Lake and what I was

going to do as a Member of this House. Right now, Mr. Speaker, I do not know.

I have listened to comments by both sides of the House. I have listened to hon. guests here yesterday. One was telling me one thing, the other was telling me something entirely different. The problem I have with it, Mr. Speaker, is I am asking myself who is Art Reid to make a decision on whether or not Canada will remain as a united country. I can honestly say to each and every member in this House this morning that the pressure is on. There is more pressure on us as individuals, I think, right now at this given hour, than there has been in a very, very long time as far as I am concerned, with the involvement that I have had over the years in municipal politics and in other things. I am so torn here this morning, Mr. Speaker, that if somebody was dead belong to me I don't think I would feel any worse than I do now.

I am afraid of the repercussions. Mr. McKenna came in here yesterday afternoon and there is no doubt in my mind, that he told us - look out Newfoundland if you do not pass this Accord. I am afraid of what is going to happen to the unemployment insurance system, to the fishery, to the Hibernia deal, to the Lower Churchill deal, and I am afraid of the repercussions that will, I guess, after tomorrow, be illustrated by the Prime Minister. I am telling you that I am afraid of the Prime Minister, and the rest of the provinces in Canada that will dictate the future of Newfoundland for a long, long time.

Yesterday I would have stood in this House and said I was voting

against the Accord, but this morning I just cannot do it. I do not know where I am. I hope and pray that something will happen. And I think, to be quite honest about it, Mr. Speaker, every single woman and man in this House is praying and hoping that something will happen before tomorrow afternoon that can straighten out this mess that we are in. I apologize for my sentimentality, Mr. Speaker, but I am lost, and it has happened in the last couple of hours. And I cannot stand here at this particular time and tell you or this House whether I am going to vote in favour or against the Meech Lake Accord. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl.

Mr. Windsor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, let me congratulate my hon. friend from Carbonear. I think his address this morning was one of the most impassioned speeches that we have had the honour to hear in this House. And I have, over the past year or so, since he has been a member of this House, a tremendous amount of respect for him, I believe his words this morning were tremendously sincere and from the heart. And I think he speaks for many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. And I find myself not greatly at odds with him, Mr. Speaker. I also, am feeling the pressures from both sides of the debate we are having in this House of Assembly and that we are having right across this great nation.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say also that I have found this to be a refreshing exercise in this Assembly. This debate is by far, the most productive, the most well

researched and thought out and soul-searching debate that I have enjoyed in this House of Assembly in my fifteen years as a member. And your honour has been hear an equal period of time, and I think you know what I mean.

It is indeed a very important debate, not only to our Province, but to our nation. Each of us as members is faced with a very serious problem. The dilemma that my hon. colleague just described; I think all of us have to search deeply for the answer to this particular dilemma.

I heard also, my friend, the Minister of Social Services, yesterday make a speech, and I thought that he said many things far better than I can. It is to the dilemma that he also is feeling in this Chamber.

I think we all, Mr. Speaker, deplore the process that we have been forced into in these past few weeks; that we saw it take place in Ottawa. And I congratulate the Premier for the fact that - although I may disagree in substance with some of his arguments - I congratulate him on the manner in which he represented his principles and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. And I think all Newfoundlanders were proud of that performance.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Windsor: Mr. Speaker, we have all been speaking with our constituents and listening to people from all over our Province, and all over Canada, over this past week or so. And I particularly want to thank my constituents, the people of Mount Pearl, hundreds of them, who made an extreme effort to phone me.

Several hundred, in fact, called me. I spoke with as many as I could personally. Many simply left messages with my office. Many people came to clinics that I held for three days in Mount Pearl. I want to particularly make mention, Mr. Speaker, to emphasize to the people of this Chamber and to the people of Canada, the degree of sincerity that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians feel on this issue.

I had one couple, both of them who are very seriously visually impaired, who took a taxi, came to my clinic, spent a half hour or so with me, discussed the issues, gave me their views, then took a taxi home again. That is the kind of sincerity we are seeing in Newfoundland and Labrador today in dealing with this particular issue. And I use them only as one example. But it was a particularly gratifying example for me to see these people dealing with such difficulties in getting to the clinic and giving me their opinions.

I was also gratified Mr. Speaker, to receive the opinions of the Mayor and Council of the City of Mount Pearl, who spoke not as a group but individually in the Council Chamber, and six of seven of that council are in support of Meech Lake. Their opinions, Mr. Speaker, as municipal leaders and as people who are continually in the community dealing with the same constituents as I, their opinions are no doubt valuable to me as well, as all the opinions that I heard throughout the week.

One thing is very clear. Two things I suspect are very, very clear. Firstly, all of the opinions that I heard were extremely sincere. Regardless of

whether they were for or against this particular issue. And there is clearly a division of opinion on this matter, very clearly a serious division of opinion, as we see right across this nation.

Regardless of the decision that takes place here, regardless of any decision that may take place in Manitoba, regardless of the outcome, this nation is very clearly divided and I don't think anything that we can do can repair that division at this stage of the game, but we must indeed try to do that and we must recognize, regardless of which side of the argument we are on, that a decision must be made and it must be made soon. It is time to get on with the nation's business, this being a very important part of the nation's business, but there are many other important aspects.

Here in Newfoundland, we have thousands of people on strike. We need to deal with that and so many other important issues in our Province and in the Nation generally. It is time to move forward. I say to the Premier, with respect, hearing some comments today on radio, that he may indeed not decide to have a vote, I say it is time for us in this Chamber to stand up and be counted, and I think the amount of effort that has gone into this debate, dictates that we must indeed proceed to a vote on this particular issue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Windsor: Mr. Speaker, as I said a few moments ago, I think the process which we have gone through, is lacking, and I think it is time, not to disregard it totally, but to accept the fact

that for whatever reasons and without laying blame, we have gone through that process and it is time now to deal with the substantive issues.

I am concerned that the process lacked the mechanism to fully inform the people of Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Windsor: My greatest concern in speaking with constituents, Newfoundlanders from all across our Province and other Canadians, and in reading the many letters that we received from all across Canada, my greatest concern was that, a great deal of the opinion, although very, very sincere, some of it was founded on misinformation, misinformation from letters to editors from other persons who, perhaps, were not greatly informed, misinformation, and let me say to the news media, Mr. Speaker, let me tell you this, that I had three reporters who came to my clinics to do feature articles. Not one of them had read the Accord. Not one of them. These are people who are going to produce news items that will influence thousands of Newfoundlanders and Canadians, not one of them had read the Accord. That concerned me. That concerned me.

And that is why I chose the route of having clinics rather than public meetings. At my clinics, I was able to sit down and deal with the substantive issues with my constituents, one on one, to discuss them with them and be sure that they understood what was in the Accord, and then receive their views, and I think I had some very valuable discussion and received some very valuable opinions from them.

Mr. Speaker, my constituents brought forward a number of very legitimate concerns, and I think we will all have found that the greatest concern, is the Distinct Society Clause. I say forthwith, Mr. Speaker, that Quebec is indeed a distinct society. I think we must recognize that fact. It is part of the notion of Canada created from upper and lower Canada, a French and English duality Nation. It is indeed a distinct society, and I believe the people of Quebec have a right to expect that to be fully recognized and I have no concern about that.

What I found in my discussions, Mr. Speaker, was a tremendous amount of anti Quebec feeling based on some of the actions that were taken in the past, and I feel that those are important, and I believe the people and the Government of Quebec must bear the responsibility for that. But I do not feel we should allow that to overshadow the importance to the people of Quebec of having their distinct culture recognized. We take some comfort in the legal opinions that have been expressed. A large number of constitutional lawyers have expressed the fact that they felt nothing in the Accord changes anything. Any rights, powers, and privileges that the people of Quebec have to protect their culture and their society, they now enjoy and indeed are exercising underneath the Charter, and this Accords provides no additional powers. The Accord itself says, and let me quote, 'Nothing in this section derogates from the powers, rights, or privileges of Parliament, or the Government of Canada, or of the Legislatures or Governments of the provinces, including any powers,

rights, or privileges, relating to language.'

Mr. Speaker, that gives me some comfort, that there was no more power, and no less power, to any Parliament of Canada, Federal or Provincial, including rights relating to language, and I still have some concerns. I have the concern that Quebec was not prepared, for example, to add words which clarified the fact that the Distinct Society Clause could not override the Charter of Rights. I have that concern and I think a lot of Newfoundlanders and Canadians share that concern, and it is unfortunate that it is there, but this is an issue that is not black and white. My engineering background wants me to know that this is right and this is wrong but an issue such as this is not of that nature. It is very largely a matter of opinion and I guess the only proof will be the test of time as to whether indeed this clause provides powers that are over and above those that they now enjoy.

Mr. Speaker, this is a time, I believe, to put aside our irritation at some of the actions of the people in the Government of Quebec in the past. We must concern ourselves now with substantive issues and I for one am not prepared to offend my fellow Canadians in Quebec by suggesting that when it comes down to the important points, indeed, they will not put Canada first.

Mr. Speaker, the Unanimity Clause was the second important issue, and I have listened to arguments on both sides. There is concern that future changes would be impossible, concern that Quebec would have a veto, but then indeed we all have a veto. Mr. Speaker,

is that not exactly what we are doing in this chamber today, exercising a veto that has been given to us by the process that we have been going through these past two years. Is it not a good example, on both sides, that a province which represents 2.5 per cent of the population could indeed hold up this Constitutional process? There is an argument against having a veto, while on the same time here is a province which is exercising its right to protect principles which are very deeply held, so again, Mr. Speaker, we have a dilemma. I recognize the benefits and the merits of a Triple E Senate but I think it is naive to think that we will move to the theoretical Triple E Senate very quickly. Constitutional reform is an evolutionary process and it will take a great deal of time. The Meech Lake Accord moves us a couple of steps closer to a Senate that we can all believe is useful, is effective, and I believe elected. I support the concept of the Triple E Senate but I do not believe that we will ever exactly have Triple E Senate in the true theoretical sense of the word, but we are moving closer. The Meech Lake Accord has given us, for the first time, a say in nominating persons to be selected by the Prime Minister. We saw it in the selection of Senator Ottenheimer, who I believe, no one in this Chamber can disagree, is a tremendous representative of our Province and the Senate of Canada. The Meech Lake Accord, Mr. Speaker, guarantees future constitutional conferences. The Charter as it now exists does not require the Prime Minister to call a constitutional conference, the Meech Lake Accord gives us that assurance.

It also assures us that Senate reform will be on the agenda of the next Constitutional Conference. It assures us of that. It also assures us, and let us not forget, Mr. Speaker, an issue of great importance to Newfoundland and Labrador. There are only two items that are assured to be on that agenda, one is Senate reform, the second is fisheries jurisdiction, more important to Newfoundland and Labrador than any other Province of Canada, and something that I believe was a major accomplishment in 1987 in negotiations leading up to the Meech Lake Accord.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Windsor: Hon. gentlemen opposite may argue that it simply puts it on the agenda to be discussed, but that is a long ways ahead, Mr. Speaker, of where we have been in the past. And for the first time it is now recognized that there is merit in discussing Federal/Provincial jurisdiction in the fishing industry.

And the companion agreement, Mr. Speaker, provides a process which now moves us into some Senate reform and provides that certain things will take place in 1995, if the Commission that is to be established has not been successful. And so, Mr. Speaker, there are three steps already in a Senate reform process contained in the Meech Lake Accord and the companion agreement. And it is indeed a beginning of a continuing revolutionary process.

Now the Premier has expressed grave concern about Federal spending power. And we all recognize the strong Central Government in Canada is essential

for the cohesiveness and the unity of this Nation. I do not disagree with that notion, in fact, I agree strongly. The Accord very clearly states, as I have already quoted 'That there are no additional powers and no less powers for the Government of Canada or the Parliament of Canada or any of the provinces.' So I find a great deal of comfort in that clause once again.

The section that the Premier has expressed concern about, Mr. Speaker, is the section which provides for Federal spending in areas of Provincial concern. These are areas that the Government of Canada is not now providing funding, except through Federal and Provincial agreements. The Accord clearly states areas of Provincial jurisdiction. So indeed what the Accord is doing is providing a mechanism whereby the Government of Canada can extend its spending authority into areas which are now of Provincial jurisdiction, and it provides the provinces the ability to opt out of the program provided they provide a similar program which is complementary, which meets the same national objective and the Government of Canada will provide the funding. Now, Mr. Speaker, I say alleluia.

I have for fifteen years been attending First Ministerial Conferences and First Ministers Conferences, Federal/Provincial Conferences arguing that national programs very often are not applicable all across our Nation, because of the diversity of our Nation. I have seen so many programs that are applicable in Downtown Toronto but are of no value in Little Heart's Ease or Fogo. How many times have I argued at Ministerial Tables that

we must have flexibility built in. And when I heard that this clause was being included in the Accord I said, what a major step forward in Federal/Provincial relations, that we can now take a national program and tailor it to be applicable in Newfoundland and Labrador because we are a very distinct society, and we have very unique needs and requirements in this Province. And I think that clause, Mr. Speaker, is an extremely positive clause and a move forward for us.

I have a fourth concern, the Supreme Court judges. I recognize that the courts in Quebec deal in civil law, and the balance of Canada is based on the English common law system. And I recognize, therefore, the three judges from Quebec would need to be well versed in civil law. I have no argument with that. I have a concern I wish to express. I have the concern that the Government of Quebec has the exclusive right to nominate persons for those three appointments. For the balance of six appointments to the Supreme Court of Canada, all provinces in Canada may nominate for those six. The Government of Quebec has the exclusive right to nominate the persons to be appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada, representing those three particular positions. That leaves me some concern that Quebec, therefore, has a power that other Provinces of Canada really do not have.

Mr. Speaker, we must consider all these substantive issues and others that are embodied in the Accord, and we must also think about the future of Newfoundland, of Canada and of the implications of whatever decision may be taken

here and by the nation as a whole. I am concerned about our ability to finance national and provincial social programs, as my friend from Carbonear has mentioned, to support the huge provincial and national debt, our ability to meet our borrowing requirements. And, indeed, there is already evidence that the financial markets, the money markets - the Minister of Finance may address this when he speaks - but there is evidence that the financial markets are concerned about the stability in Canada today, and it may not be as easy for us to borrow the huge amounts of money we need to do capital works in the future.

I am really concerned, Mr. Speaker, about our ability to attract investment. My friend, the Minister of Development, will know, as I have for so many years in that Portfolio dealt with investors who were looking at this Province, and trying to attract investors; people who were proposing to invest in the Hibernia development certainly are a case in point. We are talking billions of dollars, Mr. Speaker. They need to know that there is some security here. The Minister will confirm, I am sure, that when an investor comes into our Province he says, I want to know a number of things: What is the stability of the Government? How stable is the Government? Is it going to change quickly? Will the policies change quickly? How stable is the economy? It is a strong, vibrant economy? Am I taking part in that, or will I have a tremendous overriding influence on the economy when I establish, and will I have the same overriding negative influence when the project ends? What is the stability of the labour market

and of labour legislation? How strong are the labour laws in protecting businesses and industries? What are the financial incentives? These are all things that these people look at.

Mr. Speaker, the question has been raised, will the Government and the people of Quebec leave Canada if we vote no? I sincerely hope not, and I plead with the people of Quebec, regardless of the outcome of this debate, to consider any such action very deeply. Because I believe that would not be in the best interest of Quebec, and I believe it would not be in the best interest of Canada. But whatever happens, Mr. Speaker, I reject the notion that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians can be held responsible for whatever decision the people and the Government of Quebec may come to as time progresses.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Windsor: Mr. Speaker, we have a right and we have a responsibility to exercise our best judgement on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and I believe the people of Quebec must do likewise.

Mr. Speaker, neither do I feel an obligation today to Canadians from all across this nation who have said to us in telegrams and letters and by telephone, you must stop this, our Premiers have approved it. You alone can stop it. I do not feel an obligation to those Canadians to alone change this. I believe we have a responsibility to act in the best interest of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Windsor: Mr. Speaker, but I do fear for the future of our Province and of our nation, for the future of our children and our children's children. I have many uncertainties about the Accord and I believe I have expressed some of those here. It is a document which I believe is lacking in many respects. If I could begin today to negotiate such an Accord with a blank page, I believe I would come up with a far different document. But I know, as my friend the President of Treasury Board is learning, that the art of negotiation is in compromise. The art of negotiation is compromise, and the essence of reform is in making slow progress. I cannot vote to approve the Meech Lake Accord as it is, but neither can I vote to reject it at this point in time. I can only vote, Mr. Speaker, for what I believe is best for Newfoundland and Labrador. When the time comes tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, I will vote to choose Canada once again. It is time, indeed, for us to get on with the nation's business. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Employment and Labour Relations.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms Cowan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am extremely happy to be able to stand today and express my opinion and the opinions of my constituents on the Meech Lake Accord. I was very anxious to do that last time, when we debated the rescindment of the Accord. At that time, as some of you may recall, my father passed on and I was not in the position at that time to make a statement in the

House. And my sympathy certainly is with the hon the Leader of the Opposition at this time, because I can empathize very much with what he is going through.

But I want to say before I begin my conversation with you this morning, that I wanted to speak last time because I was against Meech. I have been against Meech since its conception, and I can see nothing that will alter in the next couple of days to change my mind. I have heard here that we are in the possibility of bringing all this devastation and so on to the Province if, indeed, we do not support Meech. My opinion is exactly the opposite to that. I feel that if we do support Meech we are going to bring long-term effects, economic effects to this Province which we will find almost impossible, if not impossible, to recover from. I have heard people comment that they are worried about UI. I have been worried about UI ever since we got that Government in Ottawa; they are out to change it, regardless of what happens in this debate here today. They are determined to dismantle the UI system, and and it is only because of the Liberal Senators, in the Senate in Ottawa, that that dismantling did not begin - or it has begun, has not leaped ahead and been accomplished.

There are people who say Medicare is in danger if we pass Meech Lake. There are people who say worker's compensation is in danger if we pass Meech Lake. So I can bring to you just as many horror stories from the other side as I can from the pro-Meech side. I did not want to say those things because I do not believe in talking in scary ways, and that is all I am going to say that is scary.

I am proud, Mr. Speaker, really proud, to be here today representing the constituents of Conception Bay South. I really have always felt a great pride in that group of individuals, but today I feel extra proud, and I have all week, ever since I started this whole process of going out and talking to my constituents. The constituents of Conception Bay are not anti-French, they are not bigoted in their views of the French. In the hundreds of calls that my staff and I have taken, we got two that reflected a rather unpleasant position which I would rather not discuss. But that was all, and we received hundreds and hundreds of calls. And I could never imply, as I have heard some hon. members do, that my constituents are bigoted.

Mr. Speaker, the constituents of Conception Bay South do know what the Accord contains. Many, in fact, preface their remarks with a disclaimer. And the Premier does that, too. He always says, 'I am not an expert, however.' That is the way we are. We say we do not know everything about a situation, because we do not want to appear as if we are know-it-alls. So it is not uncommon for people when they are discussing the Meech Lake to say, I do not know much about Meech, and then to go on and show you that they know a good deal. At least they know enough to have a good understanding, and have formed an opinion on Meech. My constituents, Mr. Speaker, are modest enough not to claim any kind of unusual knowledge but, in fact, I thought their comments were all very informed, insightful and very articulately expressed. And I think it would be at the very least presumptive, and at the most arrogant, for me not to feel

comfortable with my constituents point of view.

My experience over the past week, Mr. Speaker, has been quite different than that of many people who have spoken here in the House. I have found it an invigorating, exhilarating process. I have been out there doing with my constituents what I as elected to do - governing. And I have been doing with my constituents what has been denied all the constituents in other Provinces of Canada, with the exception of Manitoba, way back, I have been talking to them about the heart and soul of this country, the Constitution. And it has been a wonderful experience.

And some of the ways I went about getting input from my constituents were through the usual newsletter, that goes out with a tear off part at the bottom to mail back, and I received hundreds and hundreds of them back; I had a phone survey of 1,200 people; and I sat in the Anglican Church basement, in Topsail, for nine hours, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. last Saturday, and I heard 80 speeches. And during that day I was so pleased I had decided to go into politics, because there I was, out with my constituents, listening to these informed views and enjoying every single minute of it. Those constituents are not in favour of the Meech Lake Accord.

There was a gentleman there from the Wall Street Journal. He waited four hours for somebody to come in who said they were in favour, and he finally threw his arms up in despair and went off to write his story. I do not know what his story will say, because I will not see the Wall Street Journal. I think we have done a

wonderful thing here in Newfoundland by not turning the decision over to our constituents. It still rests with us in the end, and we will take the responsibility for it. I am prepared to do that, but I feel that I am reflecting the opinions of my constituents and I see no reason to believe that will change. We are not involved here in a civil war. Some people have spoken as if we were in a civil war, but we are not. We are debating what is the heart and soul of a country, its Constitution. It is a good thing to be doing. It is not divisive. In the end, it is going to make us stronger. I just cannot identify with the - I do not know how to put it, because I do not want to in any way negate some of the real conflicts that some of the people have had. But for me, Mr. Speaker, it has been a positive experience.

I first came face to face with making a decision about the Meech Lake Accord two and a half years ago, in another capacity. I was sitting as a member of the Board of Directors of the Canadian Teachers' Federation, and they were trying to decide whether or not, as the representatives of teachers, they would oppose the Accord. So I had to come to grips with it then, and I took the responsibility quite seriously at the time, and I took it because I was an educator representing educators at that time. I looked at it from an educational point of view and this is the conclusion I came to. I had been keenly aware, and I still am, of the tremendous inequality in education between here and other provinces in Canada. I know that in a very real way, because I was born and I was educated in Ontario. After I

became President of the Newfoundland Teachers' Association I continued to visit schools in Newfoundland and on the Mainland, and it only underlined for me the great disparity. One of the things that I really hoped to see some day, and I still hope to see that very much, is more federal involvement in some way or other with education at the primary/secondary level in Newfoundland.

At that time, two years ago, I was very disturbed by the spending power provision of the Accord. Education is a provincial matter, I will say that again, but I did entertain then, and now, the hope that the Federal Government, because of its commitment to promoting equal opportunity for the well-being of all Canadians, would eventually see the justice of making sure that children and youth in Atlantic Canada get an education comparable to the rest of Canada. So I felt the spending powers provision would really interfere with that and my dream would never be realized. I worry about that today, although now my mandate is wider. I worry now, too, about how it will impact on employment programs, on health, and post-secondary funding; I worry about women's programs and I worry about day care. There is no doubt, absolutely none, in my mind that the Accord will gravely weaken the ability of our national government to reduce inequalities of income and opportunities among Canadians, and the weaker regions of the country will not be protected. I worry then, too, about our aboriginal people and I worry then, too, about Senate reform.

I worried three years ago about the negative aspects of Meech Lake

and nothing since has alleviated that concern. I have heard nothing that makes me feel comfortable with the Accord, and I have waited for somebody to say something so I could have that flash of blinding light, as the Minister of Health put it, but it hasn't happened. I rejected the Accord three years ago, I reject it today. But that is enough about me.

My constituents, now, what do they think? I am very briefly going to give you a little bit of opinion of them, because we have all said the same things over and over. I felt I knew where my constituents stood on Meech Lake, because being in a rural area I had had so much interaction with them over the past few months, in various community functions and what have you. But I had not expected the overwhelming response I would get in the negative towards Meech Lake, even with all the dire predictions that were everywhere about what would happen if we rejected it.

I found, Mr. Speaker, that 90 per cent of my constituents, and I was so amazed at 90 per cent of them that I was sort of modest when I issued a press release on it and said 85 to 90 per cent, because it seemed 90 was so high. Actually, 96 per cent of the calls that came into my offices, unsolicited, were against Meech Lake. But when we sort of averaged it altogether, it was 90 and then, just to build myself a little safety net, I said 85. Anyway, they believe that every Canadian person and every Canadian province should be treated equally.

They recognize that Quebec has a unique culture and value that culture as part of the Canadian

milieu, however, they do not accept the concept of an undefined distinct society. Over and over again they referred to the plight of Canada's aboriginal people, who have been disregarded since the time of the European occupation of North America. They expressed a lot of admiration for Mr. Elijah Harper, MLA of Manitoba. And I must say that the tears that moved me the most was where I was at a Ministers' meeting a few weeks ago, Ministers responsible for the Status of Women. I was having dinner, and I actually positioned myself between the woman from Manitoba and the two from the Northwest Territories, till I got comfortable with the crowd before we started arguing Meech, and the two aboriginal, and they were aboriginal women representing those two provinces turned to me and said, 'thank God for Premier Wells. You have no idea what he means to us in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon.' And that moved me particularly, because there were those two aboriginal women, sitting there taking part in this debate at the table with the Ministers from the rest of Canada and, yet, somehow or other, they were not being considered in the Constitution. I have never been able to understand the reason for that and I never will. It defies my powers of reasoning to understand why we cannot accommodate the aboriginal peoples.

The people in Conception Bay South are very strong in their belief that no one province should be able to veto Senate reform, again something that has been mentioned here many times by my colleagues. Regional disparity is one of the main reasons we have to worry about that veto.

It is not so much about giving Quebec power, it's about giving more power to Central Canada, to the two provinces that are already most powerful, Ontario and Quebec. They see Ontario as having too much to gain by the veto. They are against having the power for Federal decision-making concentrated in the two provinces of Ontario and Quebec. And finally, Mr. Speaker, they, as everyone, were horrified by the process which cloistered constitutional reform in the confines of a conference centre in Ottawa, a process that now foists an Accord on an unwilling public.

Before I close, Mr. Speaker, I want to take a minute, as I am sure my constituents would wish, to pay tribute to our Premier. He has become a symbol throughout Canada of sincerity, honesty and principle in politics. A symbol much needed when Canadians have become cynical, and with good reason, about their political leadership. I was proud to read in a Mainland paper that of all the Premiers in Ottawa two weeks ago, he was the one the crowds waited for outside because they knew from him they would get the truth. A lot of people still have trouble dealing with that and they are always trying to say, what does he really mean? He must be saying something else. But, in fact, he says what he means.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are proud of their Premier, and thousands of Canadians envy us his leadership. In particular, I want to say to you, Mr. Premier, on behalf of my constituents, thank you for the opportunity in the past few days that you have given us to exercise our judgment to draw on our knowledge and to draw conclusions about the future of

Canada as we see it. Thank you, Mr. Premier, for letting us be involved in the democratic process in Newfoundland. And let me end my speech with the same way I began it, I have always been against the Meech Lake Accord, I am against it today, and I will be against it when the vote is called in the House.

Dr. Warren: Way to go!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for St. John's East Extern.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Parsons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I suppose I am in accord with all the rest of the speakers in this hon. House today when I say I am delighted to have been given the opportunity by the people of St. John's East Extern to be in this hon. House and to be able to address this Legislature on such an important issue.

Mr. Speaker, I am also elated, delighted to be part and parcel of such a fine group of Canadians as have already spoken here. I was also heartfelt with the deepest sense of sincerity when I heard several speeches in this House, including two or three yesterday; a couple of them by Cabinet Ministers on the other side of the House, and this morning's, by one of the back-benchers, and several speakers from this side, as well.

Mr. Speaker, I have done my best since 1967 to become aware of and be able to speak to what the Meech Lake Accord means to me, and I hope I will be able to vote in a way representative of the people I represent. Mr. Speaker, what I

did in the last week, I live in the District of St. John's East Extern. I attended one meeting pertaining to schools where Meech Lake was not of prime importance. It was mentioned casually. The sense I had from that, or the realization, 'Look, Kevin, we elected you and hopefully you are going to do the right thing for the Province and for Canada.' I also attended a retirement dinner and dance, where 300 people had gathered, and again I met with the same results. Meech Lake certainly was spoken of. In many instances, 'I wish the thing was over and we could get on with other issues.' And again some people said to me, 'Oh, well, we do not think it is a good thing, but really we do not understand what it is all about.' And I would explain to them and said, 'Well, I did my best to find out.

Over the last couple of years I met with several constitutional lawyers on my own to further my own education, I suppose, as it pertains to the Meech Lake Accord. I met with professors from the university, again with no political stripe, just to find out if the road I was taking was the right one, and if the route I was taking was the right one? I have met with, again, people from my constituency, and certainly they had mixed feelings. I accepted phone calls, and my secretary did down in the office, and as of three o'clock yesterday evening, and we have a tally here of each day. I have in my district 9,000 voters, to be precise, 8,987, and we had eighty-six calls against Meech Lake, and we had one hundred and thirty-three calls in favour. Now, I have it here and I can table it.

I might as well say this, because

it is the truth. The ones who were in favour of Meech I did not ask for a comment, because I figured, well, they were in accord or agreement with what I was all about. The ones who were against Meech Lake I would ask what their reasoning was, and usually we talked about it at length, in some respects. But these are the numbers. Out of 9,000, I received a hundred and twenty-nine calls.

Now the only thing I found, even in the calls I had, was there was a different feeling altogether when I met the people at the K-Mart's and at the supermarkets face to face. Perhaps it is because you meet them face to face, and they cannot come up to you and say, Kevin, I do not believe in what you are doing. I do not know. But the point remains that most of the people I met face to face told me, Kevin, we elected you. Hopefully you are going to make the right decision. I know very little about Meech Lake; and, again, I hope you make the right decision; and we are fed up with Meech Lake. There are a lot of other things with the economy now which are of much more importance. The people out there are suffering, to some degree, because of Meech Lake, and I think we should get on with the nations business.

Mr. Speaker, Meech Lake has been meeched to death. I have listened to many speakers in this hon. House over the past couple of days, and I think for me to go through the same ritual again today would not serve any useful purpose. I think my colleague from Mount Pearl gave an excellent speech. He delved into the inner linings of the Meech Lake Accord. And I do not think I could impress upon anyone any better than he

did, and several other speakers from both sides of the House. So, Mr. Speaker, I have decided against going into Meech Lake.

A few nights ago, I was sitting home watching television, late at night, sitting by myself, watching a debate on Meech Lake, as I did over and over and over. One of the people who were involved in the discussion said this will bring back memories of the National Convention, and he drew a comparison. So, Mr. Speaker, I went over and turned off the television, turned everything down but one little lamp, and I just sat there in an easy chair. I suppose you could say nostalgia set in, but I started to reminisce. And I remember because of my age, compared to some of the people in this hon. House. I lived in the pre-confederation era. It is no disgrace, no disgrace. Age is natural, and sometimes it is nice to be able to look back and to say to some of the hon. Members on both sides of the House, You do not know much about it, only what you read. Mr. Speaker, to me, I lived through it.

Mr. Speaker, in some of the remarks I am going to make I ask for your indulgence, because I will try to tie in with some of the personal feelings I had over the past couple of years, especially since I began thinking about it, since I began the process of reminiscing. Mr. Speaker, I was born in Flatrock, only a few kilometres from here, part of a very strong Roman Catholic family. Part of the home ritual at that particular time was that we would say a certain prayer during the day. That prayer, as many of us know, was called the Rosary. My mother, a very, very fine lady, would always say to us,

now it is time to kneel down. And believe you me, for a young man in his middle teens, the Rosary was not uppermost in my mind. But, Mr. Speaker, because I had such a deep respect for my mother, I never showed it, it was always kept in there. But, Mr. Speaker, in 1946, my mother had competition. For at the same time we always knelt down and said our prayer, we had on the same wave length the results of that days proceedings of the National Convention.

Before I go any farther, I want to tell this hon. House what the bottom line of my mother's prayers would be. In closing she always prayed for peace, prosperity, health and happiness. But the National Convention changed that trend, it changed that ritual. My mother would say, it is time now to kneel down, and my father would say, just a moment now. Malcolm Hollett, Gordon Higgins and Peter Cashin who, as we know, were all Responsible Government people, or, in fact, Ches Crosbie who was Responsible Government first and then union with the United States after we gained Responsible Government, if they were speaking, the prayers had to be put to one side, they had to be delayed. On the other hand, if Joe Smallwood, Gordon Bradley, Fudge, any of these fellows were going to speak, my father would say, it is a good time now to start it mother. And we had to cancel or go ahead with the prayers. Our praying became contingent on who was speaking at the National Convention.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Parsons: There is one gentleman, Mr. Speaker, I left out. He became a great friend of mine, the late Malcolm Hollett.

When I talk about these people, they mostly have left us. But they were great men, on both sides of the coin. Anyway, Mr. Speaker, that went on, and whatever was happening in our household came to a standstill. Now, you know, I was sixteen when it started, and Mr. Speaker, the National Convention was not very high on my list of priorities. But, as time went on, I started to listen. And by the time the National Convention finished, in 1948, I was a die-hard, the same as my father. Yes, Mr. Speaker, I was one of the people who wore a black arm band. I was one of them, Mr. Speaker, a die-hard anti-confederate, but I guess I changed, and I constructed my speech today to deal with some of the reasons why I changed. After all the debate, after all the arguments presented at the National Convention, finally two recommendations were sent to Westminster. The first was to retain the form of Commission of Government and the second was Responsible Government. There was no mention of Confederation. And I will have to give Smallwood a pat on the back, because he organized the petition. Now, I am not saying there was anything wrong done with it, but the petition with 50,000 names was sent to Westminster and Westminster decided, and I have to say, today, thank God for their decision, to put something else on the ballot paper. That was the new boy on the block. I almost said that time, new kids on the block. But the new boy on the block was Confederation with the Dominion of Canada, and Mr. Speaker, what a debate.

Boy, can I remember leaning over the old rails, the old fence, and listening to the debate among our

own people within the confines of Flatrock. It was split about 75/25 - 75 Responsible Government, 25 Confederation with Canada. I do not think there was a person, not a soul there, who wanted to vote, who wanted to think about Commission of Government. Anyway, Mr. Speaker, we all know what happened. My father went to his grave thinking it was rigged, because in the first vote we won on the ballot paper. We had 44 per cent of the vote, 41 plus, but Commission of Government had 14 per cent and it did not give us a clear majority. Again, we all thought, in our neck of the woods, that it was wrong, it was rigged, it was rigged by Westminster, that Confederation with Canada was a foregone conclusion to be placed on that ballot paper. I am not saying anyone was hoodwinked, I am not saying there was anything wrong with the deal. I do not know. But if there was, and if there was one person involved in it, then I say, today, thank God for that person.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Parsons: So, Mr. Speaker, we had another vote and the next time, as we all know, Commission of Government was taken off the ballot paper and we had two choices. Boy, I am telling you, then we did some campaigning. We did everything we could, but when the vote came out we were the losers; 52 per cent of Newfoundlanders had spoken and Confederation was to become a reality. I said before in this hon. House, and I will say it again, that I was working in Goose on March 31, 1949, the day we entered Confederation, and I felt that day, or the next day, which was April Fool's Day, that there were 52 per cent of

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who fitted that category, fools. But it did not take me long to change my mind, it did not take me long to see the advantages of Confederation. What made me change my mind? As I said, this is not what someone else told me, this is what I saw. I did not grow up with a silver spoon in my mouth. My father worked, went to sea, fished, and did everything else to try to raise us as good as he could. But next-door to me lived this old lady, and oftentimes in the evening I went and cut up some wood for her, because she lived by herself. On many occasions I went to the mail and picked up whatever mail there was and, Mr. Speaker, I will always remember the money, the remuneration, she received at that particular time. It was not called old age pension, it was called the widow's mite, and this is how much she received, twelve dollars every quarter of a year. With Confederation, I saw her monies increased by 1,000 per cent. Mr. Speaker, you should see the look on her face when she would get that cheque. I saw sons and daughters who had to take in their fathers and mothers to give them the right to survive or they would have starved to death, they had nothing to live on. In their old age, they were subjected to the niceties, to the love their sons and daughters had. I saw that change. With Confederation, people became independent. Fathers and mothers were made independent by receiving the old age pension. I saw it. I am not telling you something that someone told me, I was there. I saw it. I saw the difference. In fact, I spoke to one old gentleman the other day, a man who was wounded overseas, and I asked him about it. He said, well, boy, there was

a lot of difference. When Confederation came, my pension increased by about 500 per cent. He said, I am thankful we did the right thing in 1949.

Mr. Speaker, I saw children who were unable to go to school because there was no money, or very little money. When family allowances came - we used to call it baby bonus then. More sophisticated now, with family allowance - I saw how much family allowances did for the children of this Province. I saw when they were unable to go to school, where they could never get an education, and I saw the difference, I saw they could go to school. Even the measly amount people used to say they received from family allowance was a big help. I saw the change.

Mr. Speaker, again because of the seasonality of this Province, I saw men who could only find work for six or eight weeks of the year - for ten weeks; fishing, logging or whatever. I saw UI, an insurance that was meant to be an insurance, but because of our geography, because of our history, and I do not see anything in the immediate future that is going to change that geography or change that history, but I saw UI being a godsend to those people who were in need.

Mr. Speaker, I saw our educational system - and I believe the Minister of Education will agree with me - go ahead in leaps and bounds. We went ahead so far, you cannot appreciate what we started from and where we are today. And I want to say in this hon. House right now that we always speak about how we want to bring our educational system up to what they have in southern Ontario. I agree

we should look forward to that day. But it is a problem. Within the Meech Lake Accord there is provision made that the Federal Government can get involved in education within the Province. Quebec agreed with that, and I think that is a great start. I am not sure if we ever can attain that level because, again, of our geography, without we take everyone from every nook and cranny and corner and cove in Newfoundland, bring them in and plant them here, in St. John's, and form one great city. That is the only way I can see it. But certainly we can get a better system, we can get a better education, if we had some Federal funding. And that is in the Accord.

But I believe, Mr. Speaker, that the one thing that was greater than anything else, the one thing I get especially from the older people within the District and within Newfoundland, in fact, is what we got when we became part of medicare. Mr. Speaker, I saw people - time will not permit, but I saw people die, I did, because they could not receive the medical treatment they should have received because there was no money. Even from 1934 to 1949, when we were governed by Commission of Government. People will say, Look, boy, the bases came then. It did not make any difference. The people were paid about forty cents an hour. There was still nothing here. They had \$40 million in the coffers, off the backs of the poor people. I mean, I saw what medicare did. No matter if you were rich or poor, it gave you the opportunity to have the medical services which were your god-given right. I saw what Confederation did: It improved the situation, not by 95

per cent, it improved the situation by 100 per cent. I saw it happen.

Mr. Speaker, as all those things unfolded, as all the niceties of Confederation came to my mind, I thought about it, and then I went back and I thought about what my mother prayed for, and I believe that in 1949 the prayers my mother said were answered. Because in joining Confederation, we joined a country of peace, prosperity, health and happiness, and, Mr. Speaker, that is why today I have to say that I do not have the luxury, I do not have the right to vote against Meech Lake. I do not have that right. If there is any chance, and I am not a fearmonger, if there is the slimmest chance that any of those social programs or any of the niceties of Confederation were to be taken away from us Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, or Canadians, then I say none of us in this House have the right to do that. I mean, it is not now, it is not today, it is the future.

Mr. Speaker, I see other parts of the world every time I turn on television - we are all subject to it. I see all other parts of the world, Asia, the East Block, Africa, every time I turn on television. One person said to me, 'Look, I do not watch it any more, because I cannot sleep after I look at it.' But, Mr. Speaker, they have tangible problems. They are fighting in the streets. They have problems. Big problems! Even in the United States they have problems. But the message I get now is that people are amazed at what is happening in Canada, what is happening in the country we love. Mr. Speaker, I believe, with all due sincerity, that Meech Lake is a very, very small item, a

small piece of our Constitution for which to take the chance of breaking up this great nation.

Today I have to place some of the blame on the media. I have to say to the media that negativity became a part of their performance. Granted that is the way the news is; you have to get every part of the news and say, you know, this is what it is all about. But, Mr. Speaker, I think they created, and some politicians, as well, and rightly so, they had their feelings as well as I do, but some politicians and the media created a monster. It is too bad it is not over in Scotland. I do not look at it as Meech. I look at a lake called Meech, down the middle a country called Canada, and the latter, to me, is the greatest thing I have going for me.

Mr. Speaker, I ask each and every member of this hon. Legislature to do some soul-searching. It is a very important issue. We have a good thing going for us.

To search for some terminology, it evades me. But, Mr. Speaker, I ask each and every one of us, on all sides of the House, can we be part and parcel of destroying a good thing? Mr. Speaker, in closing I say welcome to Quebec. I say, in my very limited French, bienvenue Quebec. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for St. John's South.

Mr. Murphy: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It certainly is a pleasure for me to have an opportunity to rise in this hon. House and speak to probably what will be the most important decision any of us will have to

make as legislators. I would certainly like to congratulate all hon. members who have spoken so far. I respect their sincerity. Maybe not their opinions or decisions, but I certainly respect their sincerity and their delivery.

Almost as frightening, Mr. Speaker, is that I remember an awful lot of the things the hon. the Member for St. John's East Extern had to say this morning, especially about the Rosary and such other things, and the National Referendum and Convention.

Mr. Speaker, on a more serious note, I would like to talk initially this morning about what I feel had a great impact on the Accord we have to vote on tomorrow afternoon, namely, the process. Now when I say the process, Mr. Speaker, I think, if I can go back to 1982, when the hon. Pierre Elliott Trudeau called First Ministers together, he had a mandate, obviously, to, number one, bring the Constitution home from Britain, which he accomplished, and to have all First Ministers of this nation sign a constitution and/or a foundation for this great nation of Canada. Obviously, his task was going to be difficult, because it was the mandate of one Premier there to disrupt and to stop the process, because his mandate was one of separatism.

After that, Mr. Speaker, I suspect all Canadians had an opportunity to watch that public forum, when the Premier of this Province, and I had nothing but admiration and respect for him then as he led our concerns, and we all sat and watched him, and Mr. Peckford done us proud. But time marched on, Mr. Speaker, and we ran into the 1987 constitutional situation

whereby the new First Minister of this nation called upon the other First Ministers, and with a different format, a different style, no chance for public awareness or public participation. He and the other ten First Ministers gathered, not in secret I suppose, but certainly with a degree of secrecy, and the media or nobody else had the opportunity to see what was going on. I would suggest that as the Meech Accord untwined, Mr. Speaker, we saw that each Province had some, I suspect, little goody to bring back to their people in the Meech Accord. Ours was to have a real look at the fishery, and I have heard members opposite, the Member for Grand Bank and the Member for Mount Pearl, talk about how important it was at that particular time that the fishery would be re-addressed.

I have great problems with the sincerity of that part of the Accord, Mr. Speaker, when you consider that all of us in this hon. House in the last two years, have asked the First Minister of this country, when we saw our fishery basically destructing in front of our eyes, and we saw the tremendous amount of hardship which was befalling the rural end of this Island and Labrador and not only that but the urban area of St. John's, which I so proudly represent, going down the tube. The First Minister could not find the time to come and stand with Newfoundlanders and tell the world that we needed his support publicly, to tell those foreign nations, that the destruction they were causing on the Nose and Tail of the Grand Bank could not be accepted. So, I have little faith, Mr. Speaker, in the little piece of goodies that were dropped in 1987.

I should say this, Mr. Speaker, that the First Minister's intention was worthy, obviously worthy. He had a mandate to bring Quebec into the Constitution of this country. Mr. Speaker, the hon. Members of this House, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and all Canadians, from that point on, it was all downhill, because he became obsessed with a constitution in order to bring Quebec into Canada, almost at any cost. Almost at any cost. And that is the problem I have.

I am very quietly up to the twenty-third day of 1990. We saw very little activity until there was a First Ministers meeting called three or four months ago, and then for the first time, we had an opportunity to see the Prime Minister, when the Premier of this Province challenged, challenged the continuity, the integrity, and whether or not Meech was sound and a solid document for Canada.

And when the First Minister of this nation got somewhat befuddled by the Premier of this Province, his response was, 'don't you remember, 1949, when the people of Canada, when the people of the Canadian nation were kind enough to accept you into our Dominion'. And then the evolution got down until what we saw two weeks ago in Ottawa and I think that probably was the greatest aspect that opened the eyes of all Canadians to No. 1, the flaws associated with the Meech Accord and the statesmanship of one premier in particular and two others in general, who opposed the Accord as it was.

So the process, Mr. Speaker, was obviously wrong. I think within me, as I went about and read and

listened and watched and tried to become more and more informed on the Meech Accord, that had the process been right, had the First Minister of this country initiated a proper process, the dilemma that all hon. members are faced with in this House today, would not be on our shoulders.

I am totally and firmly convinced that the strategists, and I don't only lay it on the shoulders of the First Minister of the country, but I think it should be shared by some of his advisors and some Senators who he brought into his trust. I think the man was ill-advised. I do not and I cannot, Mr. Speaker, disagree with his intent. I think he had a mandate within himself to bring Quebec, a province of this country into the Constitution. And I can honestly say, Mr. Speaker, I was very, very hopeful that he would be successful. However, as I stand here this morning, I, like some other colleagues, have very mixed emotions about the Meech Lake Accord and the impact of whether tomorrow afternoon we accept the Accord or reject the Accord.

The Premier's statement in Ottawa which was not to sign or have anything to do with the Accord, but to bring back to the people of this Province two options. Option 1, was a referendum and/or a free vote by every voting age citizen in this Province. The time frame obviously was wrong because of that seven day dinner, and he was left only with Option 2, and that was to have a free standing vote in this hon. House.

So I went about, like the rest of my hon. colleagues here, to discuss the issues of Meech Lake. In essence, I suppose, it could be

classified as fifty-two members going out into their constituencies and basically doing our own referendum. Though it was not the referendum, I suspect and I feel that it was the second best avenue to get the feelings and the understandings from the people of Newfoundland as to how they wanted us to apply ourselves when it came time to vote on the Accord.

Well on Father's Day, and I tried to stay away from anecdotes and what have you, I went up to see my father and mother, brought him up his gift and after he opened his gift he said, hello, like most fathers, he wanted to see what his political son had brought him. I suspected he thought that this year would be a little better than last year, and he probably was disappointed. But as the well wishes went over, this Accord came up and in his close to eighty years he looked at me and he said, 'I think it is time that you get on with this foolishness, this Meech Accord.' And I said, 'Yes, I suspect, you are right. There are so many other issues, Dad, that need to be addressed.'

And some members opposite and some members on this side, especially the Member for Carbonear, who was so eloquent this morning, and the Member for Mount Pearl who wanted to address all the things that were serious and concerning him. And he felt that Meech was not that important. But we finally got through that and I said to him, as a constituent, because he lives in the District of St. John's South, I said, 'What is your opinion?' He said, 'Get on! Pass the Accord! Do not rock the boat! And there is no need.' A very wise man. And I said to him, 'Why would you make that decision, Dad?' He said, 'Well at my time

in life, I suspect that I do not want to take a chance on not being able to open those brown envelopes every month.' I said, 'Oh, well! But how do you really feel?' 'Well,' he said, 'it must be difficult for you and the other members no matter what side of the House they sit on.' He said to me, 'Meech Lake, I suspect, is a point of principle, a point of truth, and what I said to you, disregard, and vote however you in conscience feel.' So you are right, the hon. Member for Harbour Main is right, he was a wise man.

In saying that, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to you that like cream, integrity, truth, statesmanship, will always come to the top. Although, I went through the dilemma of the economic impact that rejecting Meech would have on me, would have on my constituents, would have on the people of this Province, was very heavy. I also had to deal with that terrible phrase, that tearing phrase, 'You are about to destroy Canada. You are about to break Canada into little pieces and you, forever in time, will have to live with that responsibility.' I dealt with that, Mr. Speaker, and I can honestly tell you it was not an easy task and I know it is not going to be easy up until tomorrow. But as I walked around the streets of St. John's South last week and this week, after I finished conducting two public forums, and after I initiated a poll to over 400 residents in the south, I think the count was over one thousand voters were contacted by me and/or people who helped me to try and reach this decision. I was very startled, Mr. Speaker, to find out that 76 per cent of the people that I talked to in the constituency of St. John's South, or in the riding of St. John's

South, were very adamant for me to reject the Accord.

Now I would have thought, Mr. Speaker, there was a fair amount of whatever is in there I did not want to consider. I think the most surprising thing was - although I did sense somewhere along the way some thoughts of bigotry or anti-French, because I suppose we must remember that a lot of Newfoundlanders through the Churchill Falls projects and all the projects that took place during the last Liberal Administration, I do not know if I can associate any great projects that took place in the last seventeen years, however, I know that there was some animosity in it and it came out. I did not count that animosity, Mr. Speaker, nor will I count that animosity.

What was even more surprising, Mr. Speaker, was the knowledge related to Meech Lake. Although some of them were not totally versed and they started talking about distinct society, and they start talking about the right to veto and amending, and they start talking about Senate, the Triple E Senate, all of a sudden I realized, like my hon. colleague from Placentia, that they opened up but I know little or next to little about the Accord. The more we conversed the more I realized that was not true. People were very well versed, they did understand the Accord, although they did not understand it all, they certainly had a good concept.

So, Mr. Speaker, in listening to the words of Mr. Peterson, who was with us yesterday morning, and I suppose I lingered on one particular sentence of his speech because I suppose I was looking for something in what he or

Premier McKenna might say or some other hon. member might say. I was still sitting here in my place not sure of what I was going to do and I can say that honestly and sincerely. But when I heard, 'If you are going to support the Meech Lake Accord out of fear, then do not support it.' All of the other things, whether they came from this side, that side, my father, or wherever, I realized then and only then that I had a responsibility to my own conscience, to my own feelings, and to the people who I represent in St. John's South to reject the Meech Lake Accord.

Mr. Speaker, that was not an easy decision, I can honestly say it was not an easy decision. I hope that I will continue to hold my courage up until tomorrow - to be able to stand here and honestly reject what I feel is a flawed foundation for this nation.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Burin - Placentia West.

Mr. Tobin: Mr. Speaker, today I stand in this Legislature to participate in what will probably be the most notable and most important discussion of my political career. Having been born after Confederation I was obviously born a Canadian. I have been proud to be a Canadian and I always want this country to exist, and I believe all members in this House of Assembly feel the same way. It is a country, I am sure, that we all have great respect for, a country that we all hold dearly, and it is a country that must continue to grow. I live in the district of Burin - Placentia

West, and when the House recessed last Wednesday, like the rest of my colleagues, I was back in the district. During that period of time, at my home, and since then at my office, I can say that I have only received nineteen telephone calls, which is not a lot, regarding that issue. I can tell hon. members that eleven asked me to reject the Accord, ten identified themselves, and one did not, six suggested I should vote for it, and two people advised me to use my own discretion which they would support. During that period of time, while I was in my district, I went to the shopping malls, the various business centres. I met with, and discussed it with people, and on most occasions I had to initiate the discussion. I attended a banquet last Saturday night in Marystown and I was always available to discuss what was taking place as it relates to the Meech Lake Accord with my constituents. As well, I had a poll conducted in my district, and when one reflects back and looks at what has been said to me I can see that there has been a tremendous responsibility placed on my shoulders by my constituents because the majority of people have suggested that the decision that I would make is one which they support. Having said that I acknowledge, I guess as Premier Peterson said yesterday, the test of conscience is what we will all have to live with. The ultimate decision that I will make after wide consultation with my constituents is a decision that will be mine. It will be me who has to live with my conscience, on the decision that I make, for the rest of my life, and I accept that, Mr. Speaker, as part of the privilege that the people of Burin - Placentia West had given me when

they elected me to represent them in this Chamber. I realize as well that as time progressed, and as the Minister of Social Services said yesterday, the effects may not be known in a day, a month, or a year, but there will also be a test of time.

There will be a time when we are no longer members of this Chamber, when our children, and people who will come after us, will reflect at the type of representation that we have given to this House, and will reflect, Mr. Speaker, as to whether or not we made the right decision and only the test of time will determine that. I can honestly say that I only received one personal letter from my constituents. Last week I received a letter from a man whom I greatly respect and admire. He is a lawyer in Marystown, Mr. Speaker, Mr. McBeth, and in his letter he stated, 'I implore you to vote in favour of the Meech Lake Accord.'

The Meech Lake Accord is not the end to constitutional reform, but merely another step in the process towards a constitution which better reflects Canadian ideals and the Charter of our country.'

Mr. Speaker, I understand where that gentleman is coming from. I have received copies of letters, as I am sure all other people have, from many individuals; people in the business community such as the Board of Trade, the Fisherman's Union, from Mr. Cashin. We have received letters from Mr. Young, the president of FPI and others. And one has to reflect on all of that in helping them make the decision.

Yesterday I listened with interest to the comments of Premier

Peterson and Premier McKenna. I have heard them describe the distinct society as it relates to Quebec. And I share their view that Quebec is indeed distinct. And I know the Premier of our Province shares the same view, that Quebec is a distinct society. The Premiers quite clearly pointed out that in their interpretation, that Quebec would not have any special powers as a result of that clause.

Senate reform is something in the constitution, I am sure we all agree, must take place. I share that view as well. And I can recall when I served as parliamentary assistant to the former Premier of our Province, Premier Peckford; and I had the opportunity to attend First Minister's Conference and Premier's Conference, and every one I attended; Senate reform headed the agenda by the western Provinces, and particularly the Province of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, some will ask if the power that the Senate has suffices - whether or not the Senate would need additional power to become a Triple E Senate. I do not know the answer. But if in the event the Senate does need additional powers, where will the powers come from. Will it be from the parliament of Canada, or will the legislatures of the Provinces have to give up additional powers. Mr. Speaker, I do not know the answer. I do not even know if that is part of the problem. But some people have asked me that question.

I realize that the Accord is not a perfect document. And like most Canadians, I wish it was. But I believe I must be realistic and understand that we may never have

a perfect document.

So after listening to the views that have been put forward, in this Province and outside the Province, in watching the First Minister's Conference on television, what we saw of it as others, and I concur wholeheartedly; that the process that took place in those six or seven days in Ottawa was something that none of us took much pride in. The whole process has to be changed. I share the views of Premier Wells when he stated on national television that there should be a more open debate and let the people decide. And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, I believe the Premier of this Province - while I probably differ in some of his arguments - that the presentation that he made on behalf of all Newfoundlanders had to indeed make us proud of our Premier.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tobin: But Mr. Speaker, having said that, I now want to say we have got to make a decision between the Meech Lake Accord and the future of our country. I listened to all of the speakers in this legislature yesterday and today, all of whom have expressed their feelings. I believe none expressed their feelings moreso than the Minister of Mines and Energy and the Member for Carbonear this morning. Like them, Mr. Speaker, I too have agonized over this decision. In times it has been lonely. In times it has been frightening. Never has it been easy. I have also had time alone to reflect. I have listed the reasons why I should support the Accord, and I have listed reasons why I should reject the Accord. Always, Mr. Speaker, I have come back to

wondering what this country would be like without Quebec.

I remember on several occasions in this Assembly my colleague from Grand Bank asking the question relating to the fisheries: What will happen if the scientists are wrong? What will happen if the scientists are wrong based on the fact that the quotas in the fishing industry have been drastically reduced? When at the same time the trawlermen will tell us there is more fish out there than they have ever seen before. We do know, Mr. Speaker, that as a result of that decision communities and plants will be closed. People will have moved away and their homes boarded up. The communities will be silenced with re-settlement whether it be the people moving inside or outside of our Province. And I ask myself the same question regarding the constitution. What will happen if Premier Wells is wrong and the other Premiers are right? And I guess the flip side of that is, what happens if Premier Wells is right and the other Premiers are wrong? Mr. Speaker, that is a decision all of us will have to deal with. And I believe the presence yesterday of two very noble and able Canadians has also caused us to reflect on that issue.

And as some of my colleagues in this assembly have reflected on the economic side of what will take place in this country, I listened to what Premier McKenna in particular had to say, as it relates to the visit of his Finance Minister recently to Japan and what he was told. When he talked about the interest rates increasing, Government needing additional funds to operate, when he said that his Government, like

all other Governments, would probably have to look at raising taxes or cut services in order to survive if the Meech Lake Accord fails, that too Mr. Speaker, is something I have got to weigh in the mix when I vote on Friday. I am concerned that this type of action may indeed cause Newfoundlanders a lot of hardship, as my colleague friend from Carbonear said this morning. It may cause a lot of hardship that we would be responsible for creating. And all of us will only be able to deal with that in our conscience. Mr. Speaker, I say all of this, because I am concerned about my country and my Province.

This is a great country. It is a country that many people from foreign lands have been proud to share. And we in Newfoundland, particularly this year, should be more familiar with how attractive that freedom is, Mr. Speaker, to people who wanted to be free in our society. We can look at the defections this year in Gander. And I am sure that we have all heard it several times mentioned and discussed in the media and in the House of Assembly. This country, because of its freedom, because of its democratic principles was able to provide an opening for the people who have been under severe hardship back in a different land.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure all of us remember when the Sri Lankans were set adrift off St. Shotts. I am sure everyone remembers that. We must realize the price they paid to leave their country to come to Canada. The endurance that these people, men, women and children put up with when they were brought over, Mr. Speaker, like animals in a cargo ship. When they were set

adrift at sea in a small boat, in order that they could try to start a new life in a free and democratic country called Canada.

Mr. Speaker, if my memory serves me right, the day that that took place off St. Shotts was the same day that the Premiers, the ten Premiers of this country, were gathered in Edmonton, Alberta, to start a process, to commit themselves to a process that would once again unite this country, that would bring our friends from Quebec into the Canadian family, and it is somewhat ironic that the commitment, the foresight of these ten men that they try and bring this country together as a family, was the same day that a boat load of people were flocking to our shores to be provided with what this country does and does best, freedom, Mr. Speaker, freedom that our forefathers fought for, freedom that they gave us.

Today, Mr. Speaker, because of the determination of these ten premiers back in Alberta, we are here to look at the future of this great country. We are here to decide whether or not, in my opinion, and based on what I was told by the premiers yesterday and I listen again today, we are here to decide whether or not this country will be what we want it to be, whether this country called Canada will survive as we have known it, and which we want to continue, Mr. Speaker. I can say all of this has caused me to be torn like all of my colleagues.

All of my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, I think just about everyone has participated in this debate in a nonpartisan fashion. We have all shared a great deal of respect for the views of one another. We all understand the feelings and the

emotions of one another. And I, like my colleagues, am torn over this decision as well. I am concerned about what will happen if the Meech Lake Accord is rejected. In my own district there are probably, Mr. Speaker, as many skilled tradespeople as there are anywhere in this Province, a lot of them unemployed because of the downturn in the shipbuilding industry, a lot of them and their families who are crying and praying for the Hibernia development project, a lot of them, Mr. Speaker, like many here, are wondering if such uncertainty in this country will be able to entice the investment that is needed to make that project go.

In my own neighbourhood in Marystown, there are families where the father had to leave home after years of working, who are now working on the Mainland. There are children, Mr. Speaker, who wish their father was home with them. And I am concerned that that decision, if I were to vote against the Meech Lake Accord, if that in any way delayed the Hibernia project, and caused more husbands and fathers and families to have to move from our shores in this great Island, would I be doing justice? Is the Meech Lake Accord that important that it should be rejected? That is the question I have to ask. That is the question I have wrestled with. That is the question that I am torn over, Mr. Speaker. And I believe it is for that same reason, the concern that something may happen in terms of the economic future, and the belief that Canada must stay united and strong, that there are more people in my district telling me that I should vote for the Meech Lake Accord than are telling me I

should reject the Meech Lake Accord.

However, Mr. Speaker, I know that within the next twenty-four hours I, like all of my colleagues, will be asked to make what will be the most important decisions, probably not only of our political life, but indeed of our entire life. We will be asked to make a decision that will choose the Meech Lake Accord as some people will say, or choose the country of Canada.

The decision I will make tomorrow, I don't know. I can't say that I am leaning towards approving the Accord - and I listen to other views. I am waiting for the opportunity to hear our own Premier, we have listened to other premiers and our own Premier, Mr. Speaker, his views will be as equally as important to me as the views of any other premier, and I am waiting for his views. But I can't say at this moment that I am leaning towards approving the Accord, but it is going to be a difficult decision and I sincerely hope and I pray, Mr. Speaker, that God will guide me and give me the strength to make the decision that will be right for my District, for my Province and for my Country. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Lewisporte.

Mr. Penney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I feel very privileged today to have this opportunity to speak in this debate. This is a very historic occasion and I must acknowledge the enormous responsibility that has been placed on the shoulders

of each and every MHA in this Assembly.

I think it must be acknowledged that we are being asked to make a decision that will affect the future of not only our fellow Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, but will affect the future of every single Canadian in this country from coast to coast. This is, undoubtedly, the most important decision that I have ever made in my life, and I think it will probably be the most difficult decision I will ever make in my political career.

I don't think it is any secret to anybody in this House of Assembly or anybody in the Province or in the country, the position that our Government has taken. We took the position that the Meech Lake Accord was very badly flawed and that the Meech Lake Accord was not in the best interest of Newfoundland and Labrador, and in the opinion of the members of our caucus, was not in the best interest of Canada.

We recognize that Quebec did have some very legitimate concerns, and we wanted those legitimate concerns to be addressed, but we wanted them addressed in a manner that did not compromise the just as legitimate concerns of the other provinces of this nation. It has been suggested by some members and by the media that we have refused to acknowledge Quebec as a distinct society. That is not so. That statement is a misrepresentation of the facts.

We have always acknowledged that Quebec is a distinct society. The province of Quebec is distinct for three reasons. 90 per cent of the second language that is spoken in this country is spoken in Quebec.

Quebec has a distinct culture that is a very vintage french and they have a legal system that is distinct in all of Canada to that one province, so yes, they definitely do have a distinct society and that has been recognized, I think by probably every member of this Liberal caucus, and has been stated very emphatically by the Premier on dozens of occasions.

The problem is that the Meech Lake Accord fails to identify the distinct identity of Canada, and we refuse to acknowledge the right to a special Legislative status to any one province, that is not granted to the other nine. That is the position that we have always taken and I don't really believe that anything has happened within the Accord itself to change that.

We have also acknowledged that we had some very serious concerns with Senate reform, and you have heard the figures quoted that when Newfoundland joined Confederation in 1949, Newfoundlanders on an average, received an income of 53 per cent of their fellow Canadians. And in 1987, that figure had risen all the way from 53 per cent to 56 per cent. So in twenty-six years we have closed the gap by 3 per cent, and we maintain that that is unacceptable. In order for us to become other than a have-not province, in order for us to get away from the status of second-class, we must have a reformed federal system and we must have Senate reform.

We must have a Senate that is equal, effective; equal representation in the Province's other regions, and that is effective and elected. The Meech

Lake Accord practically takes away any chance of ever having the Senate reformed because of the veto it grants to every province, and it will be acknowledged by most people that Quebec will undoubtedly exercise its right to veto. We have had problems with other areas of the Accord, Mr. Speaker. It has been the lack of reference to aboriginal rights, not recognizing women's rights, and the restrictions on Federal spending power. We have heard them all. We have heard them all debated here for hours and I do not think it needs to be debated again. But there is another position, and that is the position that is held by the Prime Minister and most of the other Premiers in this country, that if we do not accept the Meech Lake Accord we will be responsible for the break up of the country. 'We acknowledge that the Meech Lake Accord is badly flawed, that it is far from perfect, and maybe we could have done better, but it is what we have, and with all its flaws we must accept the Meech Lake Accord as it is with all its flaws, because failure to do so will be responsible for the break up of the country.' That is the position that we hear. We are told that if we do not ratify the Accord Quebec will leave the Confederation, and that we will create economic chaos. Interest rates will rise, the value of the dollar will drop, and you will probably be cut off from foreign credit. We have been told that we will probably see our social programs disappear, or at the very least badly eroded, and possibly very serious flaws in the negotiation process that goes on between Newfoundland and the Federal Government.

Premier McKenna went so far as to

suggest that we would be creating such a turmoil that we would actually see flags being torn down and being burned. The question is no longer, is the Meech Lake Accord right? The question is no longer is the Meech Lake Accord the document that we need? The question is do we reject it because we believe it is wrong, or do we accept it because we are afraid that if we do not we will have been responsible for destroying the greatest nation on earth? I do not believe it should ever have come to that, Mr. Speaker. I do not believe that should have been the question. Unfortunately this is the situation we find ourselves in today, and when this debate is over we will have to vote on what is probably, or undoubtedly, the most important issue that will ever come to the floor of this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, will Quebec separate from the Confederation if we do not ratify the Accord? I do not know. Will the country break up if the Meech Lake Accord is not ratified? I do not know that either. Does it bother me if Quebec leaves the Confederation? Yes, it most certainly does. Would it bother me to think that the country would be torn apart? Yes, it bothers me greatly, for nobody in this Province says with more pride that he is a Newfoundlander, but I state without hesitation, that I am a Canadian first and foremost. And I say that without apologies.

So, will all of those things happen? Will the interest rates go up? Probably. Will the value of the dollar go down? Probably. Will all of those other things happen? I do not know. But I believe that on June 24th, the sun

will still rise in the east and still set in the west. I do not mean to be frivolous, but some things will not change.

When Premier Wells came back from Ottawa, he stated that the decision was too great to rest on the shoulders of one man. I agree. But I will take it one step further; I believe the decision is too great to rest on the shoulders of 52 people. That is why I believe the decision should have been made in the proper manner with a referendum. When Premier Wells asked for an extension of the deadline of the 23rd, that we needed to accommodate the time frame required for a referendum; once again, our concerns were ignored. The request was denied. So we had to settle for what we considered to be second best.

Like most of my colleagues I took it to my District. I took it to my constituents and I suppose I conducted my own little mini referendum, as best I could. I hired eight students, installed three new telephones in my office, and Mr. Speaker, we polled every single household in the District. As well as that, I visited as many people as I could. I did not go door to door because with 22 communities, I could not do that. I talked to everybody who was out scraping a boat, or painting a house, or digging a ditch. And I presented my concerns on cable television in Lewisporte, and I believe I very fairly presented both sides of the argument. And I read through hundreds of letters that passed over my desk and those that were printed in the local newspapers.

The results of my poll told me that 47 per cent of the people who

live in my District acknowledge that they do not have enough information about the Meech Lake Accord to be able to make a decision. They acknowledged that they are not knowledgeable enough. They are not expert, and they really do not think that they should make the decision. I accept that. But they added that this is the decision that should be made by the MHA and they were prepared to let me make the decision on their behalf. I consider that a vote of confidence. Thirty-nine per cent said emphatically, you must vote against the Meech Lake Accord, and 14 per cent said you must vote for the Meech Lake Accord with all its flaws, out of interest of the security of the nation. The nation must not be torn apart, so you must vote for it. So that is 14 for, 39 against, and 47 per cent who are prepared to leave it entirely in my hands.

Some of the comments that I paid attention too were those that were in the letters. I would like to quote just a couple to you, I will take very little more time. A professor Penner; 'if Canadian nationalists are incapable of taking the small steps Meech Lake requires to bring Quebecers back into the constitutional fold, in a few decades there may be little of Canada left to be nationalistic about.' I have to acknowledge that, Mr. Speaker. I accept the fact that the gentleman, when he said that said it sincerely. I acknowledge as well, a letter from a Mr. Douglas Fawcett, he says equating the failure of Meech Lake with the separation of Quebec is to misrepresent the situation. To cast Meech as an instrument of national unity is ludicrous. The debate is not to say yes or no to Canada. This is a simplistic

view of the document in question. The Meech Lake Accord is first and foremost a legal document with very real implications for our future. It is not merely a symbol, a feeling or some intangible sentiment of unity. Arguments based on these premises insult the intellect of all Canadians.

I accept that statement as being sincere, as well, Mr. Speaker, but I would remind Mr. Fawcett and Professor Penner that they are not voting in this House of Assembly tomorrow. I am. And regardless of the poll, regardless of the figures I have quoted, the decision still rests squarely on my shoulders. It is a very onerous responsibility and it is not one that I take lightly.

I was very impressed with Premier Peterson's presentation in the House yesterday. I was impressed with his sincerity, and I believe the man meant what he said. I would like to quote one statement from his presentation, he said, 'I do not believe you can keep a country together on the basis of threats and fear, but rather love and respect and accommodation and tolerance. The kind of principles articulated in the BNA Act.'

And in closing, I would like to remind all hon. colleagues of a statement made by President Kennedy during the Cuban Missile Crisis, he said, 'We must never fear to negotiate, but we must never negotiate out of fear.' And I am afraid that is the position that we have been put in. And I think it is terribly unfair.

My obligations to my constituents: my obligation is to vote against the Meech Lake Accord because that is what they have asked me to do,

and I recognize that I was elected to carry out their wishes. But my obligation to my conscience is to listen to the Prime Minister when he speaks here, and to listen to Premier Devine, and to listen to them with an open mind, failure to do that, Mr. Speaker, is to do a very grave injustice to the office of these two gentlemen.

But after I have done that, and I have listened with an open mind, I assure everybody that when the vote is cast tomorrow, the vote that I cast will be done in the best interest of my constituents, in the best interest of every resident of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, and in the best interest of all Canadians. My vote will be a vote for Newfoundland and Labrador, and it will be a vote for Canada. And I will very sincerely vote in the manner that I think is correct.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Lands.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kelland: Mr. Speaker, I guess we all have our own approaches, our own feelings on what is transpiring, and all are quite a variety of approaches and how we will make our presentations to the House of Assembly. I do not propose to be a constitutional expert, and I will stay away from trying to give the impression that I am. Nor do I feel particularly philosophical about the question, and I will try to stay out of that area. I believe I know why I am in the House of Assembly, and I believe I know what my mandate is, and what it will dictate to me

when we reach a decision tomorrow.

We are in this position, ladies and gentlemen in the House, and others, a position not of our own making, by any means of our own making. We are forced into this particular position. We are forced into the circumstances we now face. And I will say it in my true belief that we have seen in the past while probably the most blatant or at least the greatest example of premeditated manipulation you are ever likely to see in your political career. We were forced into a tight time frame. We were forced to deny the people of Newfoundland and Labrador the opportunity to express their views in a referendum.

Now let us look at the word 'referendum'. Because of an extremely tight time frame we were denied that opportunity, and again I say that is not of our making, that situation. So it was decided in this House that instead of a referendum, our next best option was to have a free vote in the House of Assembly, and each member of the House of Assembly was charged with the responsibility, and accepted the responsibility, to go to their respective districts and sample the opinion of the people they represent. In other words, one rationale could be this, that because the people themselves cannot vote, we will have to vote for them. If they had the opportunity to vote on the question, my belief is, and everything I have seen and heard indicates this is correct, the Meech Lake Accord would be turned down. Because the majority of the people I have been in contact with and the majority of the people who have expressed a view in districts other than Naskaupi, seems to give

a clear indication that the majority of people in this Province want to see the Meech Lake Accord rejected. So it is a kind of mini referendum, if I can say that. The people cannot vote themselves. We have been charged with the responsibility and have accepted the responsibility to come in a vote for them.

I sampled my district, as everybody else did, I assume. We all used different methods, but I would have been in contact or have received input from several hundreds of people in the Naskaupi District. I do not feel pressure - I must use a different dictionary than everyone else - I do not feel the pressure in the same sense that I have seen it expressed in this House, and that is not to take anything away from the very emotional and far-reaching comments by my colleagues on both sides.

I was elected to take pressure. Further than elected, I am paid to take pressure. My job is to do what I am doing now. Now, you may call that pressure. But if that is pressure, I was born under pressure, I lived under pressure and I will probably die under pressure, because I ain't going to go willingly, I can tell you that, in any form. But I do accept the weight of the responsibility for making a decision and being part of a decision. It is not pressure, it is part of my job. If I did any agonizing over the question at all, I agonized for my colleagues on both sides of the House, I agonized for the positions they find themselves. I do not have to single them out, but all of us, all prior speakers, all previous speakers, have expressed some emotion. Some have bared their souls to Canada to a

deeper, to a greater extent than others, and I respect that. I agonize for them, and I agonize for the position they find themselves in.

I agonize for my colleague from Eagle River, I agonize for my colleague from Menihek and my colleague from Torngat Mountains. Because when Premier McKenna talked yesterday, part of his comments related to the fact that New Brunswick has a common border with Quebec. But so does this Province. The Island part of the Province does not, but the mainland part of the Province, a part of the whole Province, does border on Quebec. So I appreciate what my colleague from Eagle River has to go through, realizing that there is a long tradition of commercial and social and recreational linkage between his district and the neighbouring province. By the same token, my colleague from Menihek is faced with the same considerations, a long-standing commerce, we could say, social or otherwise, between Menihek District and the Province of Quebec. My colleague from Torngat Mountains, I know he stated publicly how he will vote. I do not know if there will be any change in that, but I know he stated that publicly, and we have to recognize and realize what he is going through, in that he represents the largest - the largest - native population in this Province, the largest group probably in this Province, in any one district, of aboriginal people, or those who consider themselves to be Metis. It is a well-known fact in Canada and in this Province that aboriginal people, native people, are against the Accord and want to see it defeated in this House or in some other forum.

Consequently, the member, no doubt, and I respect what he has had to go through, and I appreciate what he has had to go through, has had to do some very deep soul searching to arrive at his conclusion.

Naskaupi District, the other seat of the four in Labrador, perhaps is a bit different, as we all are different and we all are distinct, I suppose, when you come right down to the distinct society kind of a consideration. I suppose every district in the Province is a bit distinct onto itself.

The people in Naskaupi District and the Upper Lake Melville area, generally, have given me political support, going back to 1974. First of all, it was the community of Happy Valley - Goose Bay, where I was successful three consecutive times as mayor of that town, and more recently, of the broader spectrum of Naskaupi District in two provincial elections by increasing majorities. Now I have to be very attuned to that, and in the sampling, which will result in a total sum in several hundreds - I will have the exact figures a little later on - very, very close to 90 per cent of the people in Naskaupi District whom we have contacted or who have contacted us, said, 'reject the Meech Lake Accord'.

Of those who have said they believe I should vote in favour, a rough calculation of about 50 per cent of those, in other words, 5 per cent, are saying, 'Jim, we are against the Meech Lake Accord, but we think you probably should consider voting for it. So the figures are quite substantial in my district. Perhaps other districts are not that clear-cut, but my district is pretty

clear-cut on all this, when you consider 90 per cent who want me to vote no, and 5 per cent of the 10 who wish me to vote yes, have real grave concerns. The other 5 per cent didn't express anything, by the way, other than they wished to see me vote in favour of the Accord. I understand in the business community of Happy Valley - Goose Bay there is a segment of that population who wishes to see the Accord approved.

Those are the figures, and my method was by direct phone call, personal contact and soliciting phone calls into my two or three different phone numbers, where their opinions would be recorded. And we have gotten quite a good input. But I am a little amazed, actually, and a little surprised when I hear some members of the House commenting on the very few numbers of phone calls they received. I believe I heard one member saying maybe fourteen calls, something like that; another one thirty of forty calls. Maybe there were other methods used. I don't know what method they used in each individual case, but it strikes me as a surprising statistic, and I prefer to use that term. Now, a couple of members mentioned the fact that probably that was because people have other concerns, fisheries whatever, other concerns. I have a view on that, as well.

My constituency matters continued on through the week we were in recess. I take the concern of an individual who has a problem with the Department of Social Services as being a constituency matter, and they won't hold up their concern for the week I am polling my constituents on the Meech Lake Accord. So the fact that other

people will have other concerns besides Meech Lake is nothing more in my mind than the normal course of duty in my district, and I have a staff to help me solve these problems whenever I can. So to say I asked a person about Meech Lake and he said, 'Yeah, great, but what about the caplin?' that's normal, that's part of your job. You do that anyway. If Meech Lake is not here next week, we will still do it. If it wasn't there the week before, we would still do it. And while the Meech Lake opinions were being polled in the past week, you still did your constituency work. I don't put any greater significance on that than that, us carrying out the functions of our job.

Do I believe Quebec will separate because of Meech Lake? I can say like my colleague from Lewisporte that I don't know, and I really don't know. But I don't believe they will, and I believe the majority of people in my District have the same belief as I have. They don't believe Quebec will separate on Meech Lake. It may be that the Province of Quebec may find a reason to separate anyway. Do I believe Canada will disintegrate if we fail to approve the Accord? No, I do not believe that either, but I do not know with absolute certainty. I could be wrong, but I do not believe that to be the case.

A lot of Members in the House of Assembly have talked about the family, the family of Canada, and that we all should be equal members of that family. But if the Meech Lake Accord is ratified, we will have members of the family who are more equal than others. That has been said, I think, by a number of different people here. So in the analogy of a family

let's look at a family, the parents and a number of children. As soon as you treat one child better than the others, that is when you have your problems, not when you treat them equally. If Quebec comes in as part of the Canadian family and is treated differently than the rest, that is where you are going to get your discord, the same as you would in any other family. So some of the comments with respect to family structures and opening the door and welcoming Quebec into the family of Canada has to be looked at from all angles when you use an analogy such as the family structure.

If I treat one of my children better than the other two, I expect discord. If I treat them all equally, considering their age and their level of responsibility, I expect there would be less discord and a more harmonious family. By the same token, I think Canada in that analogy would be the same thing. The Premier and a number of people have said they recognize the distinctiveness of Quebec. I have no problem with that either, but not to the level where the rest and the other members of the family will have to suffer as a result.

I found some of the comments quite interesting. I recall part of the comments by the Member for Harbour Main, for example. When he was talking about it he said if he had any doubt, and he did not have any doubt, but if he had any doubt prior to hearing Premier McKenna, Premier McKenna's speech ended all doubt and he would know how to vote. I can say exactly the same thing, but with quite a different result. If I read the Member for Harbour Main correctly, he said that had he been on the fence and

not able to decide, Premier McKenna's speech would have helped him decide in favor of the Accord. I can say that if I had any doubt, and I did not, if I had any doubt, having heard the respected gentleman from our sister Province, he would have helped me make up my mind in the other direction from the Member for Harbour Main, and I would have respected the wishes of the people I represent. And if I had a tight race in that opinion, Premier McKenna would have pushed me on the side of turning down the Accord, no question.

I found it interesting, also, when the Member for St. Mary's - The Capes used an analogy of a baseball game and he talked about we always cannot hit a home run. I guess he meant that not everything we would all like to have is in the Accord, so it is not a home run but we got on base. I guess that is what he was saying. He said sometimes we even have to make a sacrifice bunt. What I think really happened in this particular baseball game is that the Prime Minister tried to steal home, if you like that analogy.

I will listen this afternoon to the two respected gentlemen who are going to be here to address us, as I did to the other two gentlemen who addressed us, and I will give the weight of what they say the weight it deserves, in my opinion.

When you get into the emotional arena, it is very difficult for people who have that approach and who cannot avoid that approach because of how strongly they feel on the question. I do sympathize with my colleagues on both sides who found themselves in that

position, but I want you to keep in mind, ladies and gentlemen, that the position we are in, I will reiterate that, is not of our making. We were forced into this position, as I said earlier, by probably the greatest example of premeditated manipulation you are ever likely to see in your term of office in the House of Assembly. I respect the people of Labrador, I respect the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, I respect the people of Canada, and I respect the people of Quebec, but the people of Naskaupi District put me in this House of Assembly twice to express their views. They were denied the right to express their views in a referendum. I am now speaking for the people who were denied that right, and when the vote comes tomorrow, Naskaupi District will be voting to turn down the Accord. Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Trinity North.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hynes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to be able to stand in this hon. House to speak in this debate, and to speak with the full knowledge that I am expressing the views of the majority of my constituents. When I had the privilege of speaking on the rescinding motion, I was concerned that what the hon. Premier was doing at the time was against all the proper procedures of the parliamentary system. I was concerned that a new Government and a new Premier could, or should, be able to rescind something that a previous

administration had already approved. I realized that according to our Constitution the Premier had every legal right to rescind the Accord prior to it being passed by all Legislatures. I knew that, Mr. Speaker, but, at the same time, I had some reservations about it being done. Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, the deed was done and we are now probably at the most crucial point in our history as a province of this great nation, and the decision we are about to make will undoubtedly be the most important and, at the same time, the most difficult one we will ever have to make as politicians.

Over the past several days, I have determined the wishes of my constituents through personal contact, telephone calls, a poll that was carried out by a consulting firm located, as a matter of fact, in Bonavista South District, and I also appeared on a local cable television channel where individuals were asked to call in and express their concerns.

Mr. Speaker, as I first indicated with regard to the rescinding motion, I voted against it. At the time, I was like a great deal of other people in this Province and throughout Canada, I knew little about the Accord and its possible impact on our country. However, over the past several months I have tried extremely hard to understand these amendments to our Constitution, and until last week, during the recess of the House of Assembly, I had basically made up my mind that the Accord, although not a perfect document, was good for Canada. Today, I can stand in this House and, after some very serious discussions with individuals in my district, who, by the way, were very

knowledgeable in the Accord, I can say now that I have reservations about this document. I also have reservations about the companion Accord that was agreed to in Ottawa last week, given that it, too, will have to go through exactly the same process that the Meech Lake Accord has to go through; it will have to be passed, at least I understand, by all Legislatures and by the Federal Government within the next three years. And with possible changes in the Federal Government and possible changes in Provincial Governments down the road, I can see that it, too, would have some difficulty in making it through the process.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier of our Province has, on numerous occasions, indicated his belief that no one Province of Canada should be able to hold up the constitutional process of this nation, and I agree with him. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, if I agree with that and I do disagree strongly with the fact that this Legislature should be able to uphold the constitutional process, then how in the name of heavens can I vote in favour of a constitutional amendment that will forever, forever and a day, give each and every Province a veto over certain future constitutional matters?

Why should Prince Edward Island, or why should Newfoundland and Labrador or Manitoba, or why should Quebec be given the right or the power to do what we are doing now, at this point in our history, the power to disapprove of a constitutional change when most other Provinces have already agreed with it?

I have some other concerns, too,

but I would like to finish up at this particular time rather than going into the afternoon session, so I will not get into others.

I have heard from certain of my constituents that the process, and they were against the Accord because of the process that was involved, the process being eleven First Ministers being locked in a room and coming out with an agreed-to document. I am not too concerned about that, Mr. Speaker, because I firmly believe that we have learned a tremendous lesson when it comes to future constitutional changes. Never again will the people of this country see amendments made to their most important document, the document which affects the very lives of every individual in this nation. Never again will amendments be made without the direct input from the citizens of our nation. And, Mr. Speaker, if not all, then 99.9 per cent of the credit for ensuring that that process will never again take place must go to our Premier. For that, Sir, all Newfoundlanders and Canadians are grateful.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the majority of my constituents have indicated to me that they want me to vote against the Meech Lake Accord. And I could very easily take that route and wash my hands of the whole affair, however, Mr. Speaker, it is not that easy. In the end it will be I who must stand and be counted. I have listened to the hon. Members express their individual opinions over the last couple of days, I have listened to the outpouring of emotions, I have observed the very grave concerns they have expressed, and the concerns are real. Each and every one of us love our Province and we love our

nation, and I am sure we all want to do what is right and what is best.

Mr. Speaker, I, like the hon. Member for Carbonear, will pray that something will happen between now and voting time on Friday that would somehow straighten out this whole affair. However, you and I know that will not happen, and in the end the decision on whether or not the Accord goes through or is rejected will be ours. Mr. Speaker, tonight I will not sleep. Tonight, I will have to decide to the best of my ability and with what information has been made available to me, including the wishes of my constituents, what is best for my Province and what is best for the future of my country. My concerns about the Accord are real, and my concerns about the future of my country are as equally real. I pray to God that when I stand tomorrow, the decision I reach will be the right one. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: By agreement, this House stands adjourned until 3:00 p.m.



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(Hansard)

Speaker: Honourable Thomas Lush

U N E D I T E D
R O U G H C O P Y

The House resumed at 3:00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House adjourn during pleasure.

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour 'Aye.'

Some Hon. Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: Those against 'Nay', carried.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Hon. members, it gives me great privilege, on your behalf, to welcome to the House today the Premier of Saskatchewan, the hon. Grant Devine.

The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, just allow me a minute or so to extend to Premier Devine the sincere expression of gratitude of all members of the House, on both sides, and in fact on behalf of all people of the Province, express to you, Sir, our gratitude for your doing us the great honour to attend here today and express to the members of this Legislature your views as to the issues that are before the Legislature at the moment. It is important that in the course of making decisions relating to something that is of major concern to the whole country that we should hear the views of statesmen from other parts of the

country. We have had the pleasure so far of hearing Premier Peterson, Premier McKenna, and later today we will hear from the Prime Minister. But in this particular case, allow me if you will, just an additional thirty seconds to read from a report in the Montreal Gazette of December 29, 1983. The heading on it is, Talking Never Hurts. Saskatchewan's Premier Grant Devine has an interesting idea, he thinks it would be useful if Provincial Premiers could occasionally speak before other Provincial Legislatures to express their provinces point of view and explain their needs. Why not? At worst it would be a few extra hours of hot air exuded in forums which already see quite a lot of it. At best, however, it might actually do what Mr. Devine thinks it would do, promote greater understanding.

Premier Devine we sincerely welcome you today to promote some greater understanding.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier Devine: Thank you, very much, Mr. Premier, Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly.

I am here at the very kind request of the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador and I want to say that I responded to the invitation to be here because of a sincere respect for the people of Newfoundland, and particularly the Premier, who has been an outspoken individual about our country and about the Constitutional process we are in. I want to thank the Premier very sincerely for his invitation to take me up on my 1983 offer to speak in the Legislature, and I want to thank all members here for their hospitality and particularly

for your time. I will try not to take up too much of your precious time because I know you are debating morning, noon and night, so I will be as brief as I can.

I am here for one reason, and one reason only, your historic vote in this Assembly will have a significant impact on Western Canada and certainly on Saskatchewan people and our economy. As your Premier said you could hear me out, so I am here to tell you a little bit about how Saskatchewan feels, and how I feel about what you are about to do. Again, I want to thank you for your time and for giving me the opportunity to express myself. You should also know something about me so that you can put it in perspective. You should know that I do not speak French, I am not a lawyer, I am of Irish decent, I am a farmer, I am an economist, and I am the Minister of Agriculture. I am the Minister of Agriculture in a province that has almost half the farmland in all of Canada. I have been Premier since 1982. I am a married man with a family of five children, and my wife and I live in the capital of the province of Saskatchewan, Regina. Saskatchewan people, like most Western Canadians, trade for a living worldwide. We are trading grain and livestock, oil and gas, potash, uranium, pulp and paper and more and more processed goods, food, manufactured products. I spend a great deal of my time as Minister of Agriculture and as the First Minister, looking at diversification efforts and on international markets and on international trade.

I want to extend my regards to the hon. Member for Windsor, Buchans, I believe, The Minister of Agriculture, we have had the

opportunity to spend some time together and he is a great entertainer.

Saskatchewan people and western Canadians have a great affection and affinity for the people of Newfoundland and indeed the Maritime provinces, particularly, I believe that you will find western Canadian people enjoy your charm, your hospitality, your humour, your warmth, your affection for family, your hard work and to a degree, because you are vulnerable due to the weather, farmers and fishermen have much in common and they tend to enjoy the same kind of conversations and in many cases what happens with the sea and with fish is very similar to what happens with the soil and with rain and with the grain.

It seems like our lives are always in somebody else's hands and in some cases, clearly it is just the good Lord's, the environment. Given that affinity, I can say to you, in my province, the people are pretty much tired of hearing about constitutional concerns, they are pretty much tired of hearing about Meech Lake, they want to hear about lower interest rates, about higher prices for commodities, about new markets, about fair trade rule, about new jobs, new opportunities and they want to talk about hope in the 1990s and the 21st century.

Frankly, they know more about GATT, the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade than they do the Constitution. Generally, you will see farmers and other business people talking about international trade, and certainly the children, I think, frankly, they are getting a little bit tired of hearing about Meech Lake. I will tell you Mr. Premier, that while I was away

in Ottawa, one night my four year old crawled into bed with my wife and she was sleeping there, she was a little lonesome for dad, I guess, and about three o'clock in the morning she just woke up, sat up and yelled: 'Meech Lake'! My wife had to smile, I mean enough is enough.

What the people of Saskatchewan are saying, you know, enough is enough, don't fondle it, fix it! We have been talking about this for some time, vote, make a decision, get on with life. There is so much that we can be doing in this country, that we should be addressing. Let me also say that the whole constitutional game is not new.

I was elected in 1982, after the Constitution was brought home to this country. I can tell you that post that period, when the Prime Minister, Mr. Trudeau and our Premier, Mr. Blakeney finished with that process, it was very unpopular. It was so unpopular, frankly that in our election of 1982, we won every seat but eight.

People were not happy with the constitutional process and they didn't like the result. There was great concern about the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and still is, and I can say with a great deal of certainty that if we had held a referendum on the Constitution, we probably would have rejected it in the province of Saskatchewan in 1982.

Because it was not perfect and because people didn't understand it, and for a whole bunch of reasons that they were just fed up with the discussions which we had with respect to it. But we didn't of course, because I believe that it is important that the process

carry on and that the constitutional amendments are not perfect as most people know and we will have more amendments and more amendments as time goes on.

In 1982, there were some errors and some omissions with respect to the constitutional process. One province was left out of the constitutional family. 25 per cent of Canadians were not part of the action, so, we needed some mechanism, number one, to get them in and number two, to find out how we could make more amendments because it was a lot easier amending the constitution if we had everybody involved than if we had a good part of them out. So, the premiers went to work and decided to work on a mechanism whereby we could do that. And there was a new Premier in Quebec, not a separatist, but a Liberal Premier who was pro-Canada, Robert Bourassa. In 1985, as a result of Premier Getty's invitation and a great deal of work, we agreed on a mechanism to resolve this difference and the Edmonton declaration is there for history. And two years later, we had all of the Premiers in the country sign on, we finally had a process that we thought would work and then we had three years to pass it, and in 1990, here we are. So we have been going at it for some time. And again, it has not been perfect but now we must deal with the process that is before us and it is very, very historic.

I asked myself coming into this Legislature today, so what is the real problem, what do we face? We face questions that are legal, economic and political in dimension, and I just want to touch on them very briefly.

I agree with Premier Wells and my

fellow Premiers on several points. I think it is fair to say that the Premier of Newfoundland has said, "I cannot imagine a Canada without Quebec". Well I feel the same. I find it very difficult to imagine this nation without one of us as Provinces, it just would not be Canada. Well I agree with that.

There is no question, as well, that Quebec is a distinct society and people have said that. Premiers right across the country and the Premier of Newfoundland and others. It is distinct because it has a distinct language, I do not happen to speak it. It has distinct law, different kinds of customs, even the way that they allocate their Senators, that is unique, and I agree with that and I believe all the Premiers agree.

I also agree that Premier Bourassa is not a separatist, he is pro-Canada and he wants to be welcomed into the nation and that is good. I can tell you that when I was first elected, I sat at the Constitutional table, or other tables with Pierre Trudeau and with Rene Levesque, and that was interesting to say the least, they were trying times, it was not real friendly, and they went at each other, a significant difference, I can tell you from being at the same table with Robert Bourassa. His attitude is one of Canada, pro-Canada, and he wants to resolve the difference, an awful lot different from Rene Levesque.

So if we can agree that we do not want Canada without a Quebec, if we agree that they do have a distinct language and culture and legal system and agree that we have a Liberal Premier in the Province of Quebec that wants to

the a part of Canada, then what is the problem.

Well, again, I go back to legal and economic and political questions. Does calling Quebec a distinct society in our Constitution give them unique powers. Well as I said at the beginning, I am not a lawyer. I cannot answer that. Experts say, maybe yes, maybe no. Most say, from what I can gather, that not likely but if yes, probably only at the margin, small and if so, probably only in Quebec where most of them want their culture protected anyway.

Will we be able to get Senate reform with the formula and the veto on the mechanism we have here? Well, I believe that we will, I voted for the veto for the Province of Saskatchewan because I wanted the same power as Ontario and Quebec, I kind of like that and so do the people in Saskatchewan. And now with this mechanism, particularly as a result of the very positive gesture by the Premier of Ontario and the Premiers of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, I believe we have the opportunity for real Senate reform. So that gets down into the economic and the political arguments.

What are the consequences of passing this Accord versus rejecting it. What does it do to the Constitutional family. How politically stable is Quebec and Canada if we say no, or if we rub Quebec face, sort of, on this door mat as they want to come back into the Constitutional family one more time. I do not know the answer to that either and I am not so sure anybody in the room or anybody in the country knows the answer to that, but I do know there are

extremists in western Canada and there are extremists in central Canada and certainly in the Province of Quebec and in other places who would be given, I believe, a political edge and a political edge can be dangerous given to the wrong people.

Now, when we are talking about extremists dealing with the country, when we are talking about some impact on the economic consequences for this nation, then as a politician, as an economist, and as a Minister of Agriculture and as a Premier I can really get involved. I do not know all the legal answers, but I do know some of the consequences when it comes to economics and particularly when it comes to economics in Western Canada. I believe that I perhaps earned the right to speak about the impact that we have on farmers, on families, on interest rates, wheat prices, credit ratings, economic confidence, and the chances for prosperity, for me, my children and for people across the nation. But most specifically in Saskatchewan. I do not believe that this is the question of whether your constitution or mine, or any other particular mechanism is going to be perfect. I do not believe that this is really a question about whether in fact we enjoy French or we like it. Or whether we are really fond of those who live in Quebec. I believe the real question we have to face is that what is this going to do to this nation, what will it do to Canada? What will it do to our economic well being, one way or the other? One way or the other? I think it is a fair statement to say it will have an impact. How you vote in here will have an impact in the province of Saskatchewan, could have an impact

on my livelihood as a farmer, on my interest rate and my credit rating, on the confidence in our economy. So the question is not just about the constitutional amendment, the question is, what about the nation, what does it do with respect to the nation? Your vote is about my country, our country. Your vote is about my Province, it is about my Canadian dollar, your Canadian dollar. It is about interest rate costs and we bear them. It is about trade ties, it is about the Canadian reputation, it is about our future. This vote is not so much about Meech Lake and the constitutional amendment, this vote is about the political and the economic well being of Saskatchewan, of Newfoundland and of Canada, and of this nation. That is what is at stake here. Let me just address some questions. They need to be answered and I am sure that when you are talking to your constituents all over the province that you are asking these same questions. Is this amendment perfect? No, it is not perfect. I have not found one that is. I have watched the United States system. I do not know how many amendments in the United States constitution, but they are not perfect and they are judged every day. The fourth amendment and the fifth amendment, no it is not perfect. It is so bad that it would be worth jamming a Provinces face in it one more time? Now that is an interesting question. It is so flawed, that we can run the risk of saying to a Province that finally wants to be part of this nation; no I am just not sure, so I want you to go back out of the door again and come in a different way. I do not think it is worth that. Would we ever want to let the extremists or the

radicals say in a Province of Quebec have the edge, the political edge? No I do not think we would. Do we think that if we reject this offer, it will be easier next time? I do not think so. If we say no now, do we actually think that it will be easier at any foreseeable time in the future for something that is less? Well, that is a good question. I do not think so. If we sort of wreck on this, or know in a way that is difficult for 25 percent of the population. Will it be beneficial to our credit rating, our interests rates, our confidence, our international reputation? I do not think it will. And all signs I would think would say, that that is the case. Will we get senate reform if this fails? Highly unlikely for a long, long, long time. Will it go away if we say no this week? Well no, I do not think it will go away. In fact, I think you are going to see on the front page of the paper for a long time, for days, and weeks and months and maybe even years to come, constitutional problems. And dealing with the Province of Quebec, day after day, after day, so maybe just once in our life my four year old will sit up in bed and holler Meech Lake. Maybe it will be more often than that, because it will go on and on and on. Then there is the question I am sure people will hear in Newfoundland. Is it ever over with Quebec? Well the answer is probably, no. But then, there is the real question, if you have a distinct character in your country in a different language, how best do you deal with it? Do you deal with it by saying 'no', forcing them out, or do you deal with it by having them part of the family and say that is our personality? Because they are frightened. I

understand, by some polls and some research that the city of Montreal will be English-speaking, dominated English-speaking, soon. Well, the people of Quebec are hanging on to their language and their culture with their fingernails. I mean, it is slipping away because it is an island of a particular culture in a sea of English. So you can understand why it won't be over with then. But should it be dealt with inside the nation or should it be dealt with outside?

Well, finally, let me just ask the question: How would Mr. Parizeau like us to vote? That is an interesting question. I know how Mr. Levesque would have wanted us to vote. I have been at conferences with him and Mr. Parizeau and, in my view, Mr. Parizeau wants the nation to say 'no' and it will give him every excuse to do all the things he wants to do, and that is not in my best interests in Saskatchewan, not as a farmer, not as an economist, not as Minister of Agriculture, not as the Premier, because if he wins, I am losing, as a Canadian, and I believe that.

Well, I think it would be easier to deal with Quebec on our terms in this nation. I don't want to go to a general agreement on tariff and trade and deal with Quebec across the table as another nation. I don't want to deal with them on the St. Lawrence as another nation when I am marketing my wheat. I don't think we want to deal with them with fish or hydro or many other things, as a separate nation. I believe we should be as a family here in this country and then we can deal with it as we should, very powerfully.

Let me just say a word about why I

think it is important to the country, Canada. I recently spoke at a graduation in Notre Dame, Saskatchewan. It was a high school graduation, my son graduated from Grade XII. And their theme was 'synergy'. It means that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Two and two can be five. The way the Chancellor described it, he said, if you took ten men, and each man could pull about a hundred pounds on a rope, one of them at a time, you can pull a hundred pounds, but if you put ten of them on the rope, he says, they will pull 1,500 pounds. Where does the 500 pounds come from? It comes from spirit, from collective effort, it is a magic. It is part of what you would find in a nation. I believe Canada is filled with synergy, with ten provinces and its territories, full of synergy. We have more respect and more regard internationally than we deserve, as a very, very small country with a small population, the part of the G7. We carry political weight, economic clout, way beyond what the 26 million people, frankly, probably deserve. That reputation goes with us. It is synergy. It is more than just a province plus a province plus a province, it is a spirit, a reflection; it has been through two World Wars and many more, and when we go to the GATT, the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade, and we deal internationally on free trade agreements, whether it is with the United States or with Mexico or the Pacific Rim, or Western or Eastern Europe, it will be as a nation that is very large, from sea to sea to sea. I believe that is very important. And, as we deal - and the Premier and I were just talking about the Atlantic Governors and the meeting on

Western Europe and the impact, all of those countries, one major force, 300 million people, all dealing, different languages, different cultures, in fact, some of them were at war with each other not that long ago, the French, English, German, Spanish, and now they are all one, with even maybe one common currency, it seems to me that this nation, with its potential synergy and growth, starts to deal with that force, I am not so sure we want to be ten separate parts. I believe the nation, itself can be very influential in our impact there to be significant. So it does have an impact and will continue to have an impact.

I had the opportunity recently to meet with Mr. Gorbachev. Imagine what this man is going through. We are twinning with a republic in the Soviet Union called Kazakhstan, and there are eighty different ethnic origins in Kazakhstan, twenty-five languages, and I don't know how many ethnic dialects, and the Soviet Union is much the same as that. Mr. Gorbachev comes to Canada and he can't believe what we are doing, we are looked at with envy. We are democratic, we are open, we trade, we are stable, we have so much. He just shook his head and smiled when we talked about the Constitutional crisis that is before us. You want to talk about some rural challenges brought into the Soviet Union this afternoon to see what it is like.

Well the rest of the world needs leadership, needs an example of how nations of free men and free women from all over the world, immigrants all over the place can live in a democracy and treat each other with respect and generosity, and we can be that example. I do

not know of a better example, young nation, in transition, that synergy, that magic that this nation has, is something that we do not want to take lightly.

Let me say, as well, I do not know if I believe that a Province like Saskatchewan can stand a serious degree of economic chaos. I do not know about your credit rating or I do not know about how your economic conditions are, and how much money you have to borrow, and how your unemployment is, but I will tell you in my Province, we probably lead the nation in the loss of people because of drought and it hurts. I do not need higher interest rates, and I do not need economic instability, and I do not need a weak voice at the international negotiations that are going on, and I do not need to be part of something that is not a part of the G7 but maybe, as they said, the G77. I am not confident that our economies in this young nation are strong enough to go out on their own and suffer the consequences.

Now again, we go back to at the margin, I am not a lawyer, is it worth it. Economically and politically, I do not know what the politics are in Quebec but I do trust Robert Bourassa's judgment when it comes to those decisions, I do not know who else to judge or look at, but I mean the man has been Premier a couple of times and he has gone through several very, very difficult times, I think he knows, I listen to him, he has some sense of what is going on in Quebec, if you are going to pick somebody, I suppose you could pick him. He is a fellow Premier, but I do not know if what he says, if it is true of what he says, then the economic consequences of my Province could

be severe and significant, that is a fact. And I am not so sure I want to get into that hassle. I am not so sure that we are strong enough to really sustain ourselves and be prosperous as we could be into the 1990s.

Well, let me wrap this up, Mr. Premier. I want to do so with a story that expresses how I feel about the country. As you know, at harvest time in the Prairies, in western Canada, the wheat will be about this high, maybe higher it is a good year, hopefully this year it will be about that high.

One fall, at harvest time in southern Saskatchewan, a young farmer was out in the yard and he was working on his combine early in the morning, and he had his little son with him, who is two and a half years old. And they were working around the machinery and what not, it was a nice morning, and he looked around and he could not find the boy. He was gone. And he looked around the yard and he could not find him and then he realized what had happened, he probably wandered out into the wheat. And the wheat is this high for as far as you can see, literally a sea of wheat.

So he looked around and he called and he could not find his son. So he went into the house and he got his wife and they looked for about an hour, and they could not find him. So then they put in a long ring on the telephone and, in the Prairies, we grew up with sort of a party line, you could put one long ring in and everybody could get a hold of it and you knew what everybody was doing but when there was a real long ring, you always came to the phone because you figured there might be something wrong, so they put in a long ring

and kept ringing it and people came to the phone and the young fellow said, look I have lost my son, I think he is in the wheat, I need your help.

And they came from all over the place to find this boy and they looked all day and they looked all night and they looked all of the next day, all night, and they could not find him. And in the morning of the third day, they were standing in the yard and they were exhausted. They had not found the boy. And the young man, he turned to his friends and his neighbors and he said. Let's join hands and walk out into the wheat one more time, let's join hands. And so they did. They joined hands like this and they just spread out across for about a quarter of a mile or more, and then they walked out for a quarter of a mile or more and then they walked out into the (inaudible). And they would no more walked to about ten paces when they found the boy. But it was too late. He was gone. And the young man turned to his wife and he said, if we had only held hands earlier. We have a problem in the nation with respect to the constitution. One of our children is outside, and they want to come in. We do not have many opportunities to give him a hug and say come on in and let us get on with it. I believe it is time for the nation to hold hands. I believe that as a young nation we need to have a degree of forgiveness, a degree of generosity and openness, because we are young. We do not have all the answers. I do not have all the answers for lots of stuff. But I would hate to think that a decision that we make this week, here or any place else could pull those hands apart, and do significant serious damage to this

nation. Let me say that the leadership to do that takes courage. I understand that. I am paying a political price being here. Constitutional accord and its discussions are not popular in rural Saskatchewan where I get my support. They do not want to hear about it. It comes at a political price. We all face that. Leadership takes courage. I think it is important when you are polling your people to ask the right question. Ask the right question. Make sure they are giving you the answer to the question about the nation, not about an amendment. Because this is far bigger than an amendment or I would not even be here, I will tell you that. This is about the heart and the soul of this nation, that is holding hands like this and saying we want to go into the twenty-first century with the synergy and the magic and all of the hope and prosperity that we can build. That is the questions that you should be polling about. It is going to take courage to deliver that answer. So I congratulate you Mr. Premier for taking this vote here. It is very important and you will vote as you see fit. I really appreciate the fact that you would invite me to speak here at this historic time. I would only hope that the people of Manitoba and the politicians there will vote as you do. I think they should be counted, honestly they should stand in their places and vote one way or another, but for heavens sake vote, because you are doing the right thing here. You are going to be counted. Tomorrow our prayers will be with you. As I said on Saturday night when we wrapped up our seven days and seven nights, I believe that the good Lord has a special place in his mind for this country. It is

now in our hands, I just pray we do not disappoint him. Thanks.

Premier Wells: Premier Devine, I just want to take one more minute to now state to you the gratitude of the Members of this Assembly and the people of the Province for your very frank expression of views. Whether we share the views or we do not, I can assure you of one thing that I believe that every Member of this House will take into account what you have said and will put that into the total mix that they have to take into account and make their decision. And whatever that decision is in the end you can be assured that all of the Members will have considered extensively what you said. Thank you again, for having done us the great honour to come and join us and I invite the Opposition House Leader to express his views too.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Simms: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Leader of the Opposition who is not here and I hope that the Premier of Saskatchewan is aware of why, and on behalf of the Caucus, I certainly want to thank you for taking the time to come here to our Province and to speak not only to the Members of the House of Assembly, but to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, which is perhaps even more important. It is pretty obvious, I guess, that anybody who would travel the distance you have travelled has a sincere conviction about which he speaks. I think I speak for everybody on this side, certainly, and probably on that side, that the address you gave was certainly very moving and will be thought provoking no doubt, as were the

presentations of your two colleagues who spoke to us yesterday. I might just add, if I can be bold enough, since you are a Premier who believes deeply in giving others the opportunity to speak to other Legislatures, to promote a greater and better understanding that you might issue the invitation to our Premier to come to your Province one day soon, so that he may take the opportunity to tell your people in Saskatchewan a bit more about Newfoundland, other than Meech Lake. I would like for him to tell you about the fishery about which our very heritage and culture is built, around which our heritage is built, and other issues which are of great importance. I think that would be a tremendous idea and I commend you for initiating it back in 1983, and I commend the Premier for taking you up on that particular challenge.

Again, we thank you for coming, and we wish you Godspeed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The House will now come to order.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Baker: Motion 3, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I believe that the Member for Trinity North had finished his speech.

The hon. the Member for St. George's.

Mr. Short: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is indeed a pleasure this evening to rise in this hon. House and to stand with my fellow

members on both sides of this House and address this very important issue. I would say from the outset that there has been no pleasure in the last twelve days. It has certainly been an agonizing twelve days and like all members that have spoken so far I have had, I guess, some sleepless nights. One night last week when I was home my wife said I was even talking about Meech Lake in my sleep and I suppose that is an indication, perhaps, of how much it is on my mind as well as on the minds of other members who have spoken so far. I feel today that I am just one member of this Legislature that is perhaps carrying the weight of a nation on our shoulders. When you think of that then it is an agonizing and frustrating decision that we must make tomorrow. As I said there is no pleasure in what we have been doing. Like everybody else I travelled to my district last Wednesday and I talked to as many people as I could from Thursday until Monday evening and there were a number of things that were said to me. One of the things I said to everybody that I talked to was that I had come to the district with an open mind. I wanted to listen to those people and I wanted to hear their views. One of the things I got in responses was that there was certainly an overwhelming disgust with the process that we had just gone through. Certainly, with the seven days and seven nights there was also frustration, and sometimes anger with the time frame that we had been put in in the last couple of weeks, but in the end I was also told in no uncertain terms by at least 75 per cent of my constituents that I talked to, that I should vote for rejection. Now there were some opposite views, of course,

expressed to me, one being that we might be blamed for the separation of Quebec somewhere in the future or the break-up of Canada. There were people who wanted to talk about the economic ramifications for Newfoundland, especially on the part of the Federal Government, and that was certainly a big concern of some people. And, I believe Premier Devine mentioned this one, that in fact we might be doing exactly what the Opposition in Quebec would like us to do and that is to kill the Meech Lake Accord.

And I suppose now that I have been to the District and so on that the real question remains: Do I as a Member feel that I can live with what was agreed to in 1987, or even the communiqué of June 9. I can honestly say that the open mind that I went to the District with last Wednesday is still an open mind. I certainly have to take into consideration the 75 per cent of the people that said to reject on Friday, because those are the people that elected me and I certainly have to listen to them.

But I can say that I still, even at this point in time, I am still open to the comments of everybody that is going to speak, we have heard from approximately half the people in this House, but there are still another twenty-odd left and I would certainly like to hear them. I am also interested in hearing what the Prime Minister has to say later on today. So from that perspective, I am saying that I am keeping an open mind.

I listened yesterday to Premier Peterson and he talked about the history of this and he did a very good job of it, I must say, going back even to 1867 and so on, but there was one question that came

into my mind as Premier Peterson was talking yesterday because he said that Quebec would never have joined in 1982 because of the government of the day. And the question that I asked myself was: Had Premier Bourassa been the Premier of Quebec in 1982, I wonder if he had signed on, would he have signed on at that time. And that question I pose here today because if the answer is no then I wonder what we are doing here today, or I wonder if there is any point in trying to bring to bring Quebec into the Constitution. Now I do not know the answer to that but it is certainly a question worth thinking about.

The other point that I want to make is that all of the seven days that the eleven First Ministers sat in their secret meetings and so on, I was waiting, as one member, waiting to see if Quebec was going to move at all, if there was any conciliation.

I got an impression from watching the news every night that everybody at the meeting was trying to put the best face on this, that there was room for movement, that everybody who went with a set demand or set number of demands and so on, that they were prepared to compromise. We saw it, certainly, from Ontario. We saw it from some of the other Provinces when they talked about giving up their Senate seats and redistributing.

The thing that bothered me after the whole seven days were over, was that, in spite of what Mr. Parizeau had said and has said since, there wasn't any movement on the part of Quebec. Now, there are those people who would argue that the Premier didn't have any

room to move, but personally, I don't buy that argument, that when eleven people sit down and they try to negotiate all the differences that are on the table, I believe everybody has to compromise a little and I am sure that had there been any compromise at all from the province of Quebec, I don't think we would be sitting here today, agonizing over what we are going to do tomorrow. I really and truly believe that. I don't think it would have taken a great deal either, a great deal of movement to have perhaps gotten an agreement.

We heard a lot about the missing Clause. I have been bothered by the wording of the Distinct Society Clause ever since we started talking about this issue, and it baffles me that after three years of talking about it, and I am sure we could probably find three or four feet of paper, if we stacked it all in here about the different legal opinions onto it. It baffles me that after three years that we couldn't sit down and very clearly say that this will not override The Charter of Rights. It bothers me. It really does.

Of course, the other thing that bothers me in this, is, the Senate reform. I have difficulty with the idea that if we sign on June 23rd, that we are going to give Quebec the veto over the very thing which we say we would like to have and, I find it somewhat ironic, I suppose, that over the last two days, we have discussed this very issue in terms of what we are doing. The mere fact that we as a Government, can be accused of using a veto and we are all saying that's wrong and yet, if we accept this thing tomorrow, we will be doing exactly that. I

have a lot of difficulty with that idea.

In cluing up, Mr. Speaker, I certainly have to be mindful of the 75 per cent who said reject, however, I also have to consider the economic ramifications because we are a very poor province. Right now, as I said, I am prepared to reserve my judgement until I have heard everyone in this debate. I agree however, with the idea of a free vote because I believe we need to do it. We couldn't have a referendum, but I believe we certainly need to exercise that vote and of course, it is going to be totally free, even though, it may be academic in terms of what's going on in Manitoba, but I suppose we can't really say we will close the House and let Manitoba decide. I think we have to make a judgement here as well tomorrow, so I will reserve my judgement until I have heard everyone. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Warren: I, too, as all previous speakers, have indicated in this House, I am very pleased to participate in what is a historic debate. I think we all agree, Mr. Speaker, that the past few weeks have been difficult and troubling for many Canadians. I know how difficult this period has been for many of my constituents and for many of us here in this House. Certainly, I have been troubled and I have truly agonized over this issue. Going back to what the previous speaker said, my friend for St. George's, when the Premier went to Ottawa just over two weeks ago I was somewhat hopeful that a solution to this problem would be found, that some

compromise would result. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that the First Ministers could not ignore the views of many Canadians, perhaps the majority of Canadians, that the Accord was flawed. I really believe that a compromise would be reached but that did not happen. As we all know, with the possible exception of some movement on senate reform the add-ons did nothing, or very little, to address the major faults identified by this Province, by the Province of Manitoba, and even by the Charest Committee. Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, I was hopeful that a compromise would be reached because of my belief in this country. I am proud to be a Canadian, I feel very much at home in all parts of this nation, and when I travel abroad I am even prouder to be a Canadian because Canadians are respected throughout the world. Mr. Speaker, I am sure all of us in this House are proud to be Canadians and want to do everything possible to make this country even better. Now, the question I would like to raise is, how will this Accord impact on our future? Will it make this country better? Over the next few minutes I want to comment on what my constituents said about these questions, and very briefly on my own views. I have tried to balance these two things in arriving at a final decision on how I should vote tomorrow. Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, I should say a word about the consultations I undertook over the past week. I met and talked to hundreds of constituents and while any said they did not understand the issue they indeed were informed. Many people have stressed this point. Newfoundlanders may not understand the technicalities, the add-ons, but they are informed about the

basic issues, and they are concerned, and they did want to discuss these with me. These consultations, Mr. Speaker, confirmed for me that people in a country, all people, want to be, and should be involved in constitution making. I do want to say a few words about the process. I believe that the process undertaken in the last two or three years, during the Meech Lake discussion, is inconsistent with established democratic procedures for amending a nation's constitution. Such serious business, and I believe it is important, calls for full and open public debate, along with opportunities for discussion and reflection, with drafts of constitutions being discussed for public scrutiny before any final document is approved, and none of this happened. As my friend for the Strait of Bell Isle said this is a very serious deficiency, and I believe, Mr. Speaker, that the problems we are now facing with regard to the Accord are rooted in the fact that the Constitution has been treated as a kind of contract between governments and between First Ministers. When I hear the phrase like this - New Brunswick wants this; or Alberta wants something else; or Peterson wants something else, I really wonder and I wonder. I just cannot go beyond on that. I wonder if the Premier concerned really represents the position of the majority of the population of his Province? I wonder about that. Maybe he does, but I wonder. I wonder too Mr. Speaker, how many Premiers, who supported the Accord will be able to have it approved by the legislatures today if they were to resubmit the Accord? Or how many would be prepared, how many of those who signed them would be prepared to submit this

question to a public referendum? I know one Premier, in this country, Mr. Speaker, who wanted to open up the process to the people. Who believes in public consultation, who trusts the people on such an important issue and I would like to thank him. I hope he is listening. I would like to thank him on behalf of our people for that trust. If the constitution is the framework for democracy, surely open debate if what gives it life. I sincerely believe that if the public had been really involved in the constitutional process over an extended period they would not feel as cheated as they do. Or feel trapped in a situation not of their own making. I really believe that, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have about five readings of the views of my constituents on this very important matter. I received over two hundred and fifty telephone calls, I think it was two hundred and thirty four yesterday and quite a number today. And 82 percent said do not approve. Most of these calls were from people of my own district. I received hundreds of letters. The vast majority against approving. Many of these came from outside my district and indeed outside the Province. A vote of over two hundred constituents who attended a public meeting in my riding on Monday and they did a secret ballot at the end resulted in a 90 percent figure against my approving. A poll of high school students and it was a small poll of about 25 high school students in one school only. Resulted in a 77 percent do not sign recommendation. And in a random poll of three hundred and eighty five of my constituents, 64 percent said do not approve. 20 percent said yes, and 16 percent

were undecided. I did go door to door as well, Mr. Speaker. And in choosing the areas of my district to visit. I choose areas where last year, a year ago, my vote was very high. I choose areas in the district where last year I broke even. And there were one or two areas where I did not win handily, where my opponent won and I went to these areas as well. I wanted to get a cross section of the district and I wanted to find out my friend did across the way, why people thought as they did. Almost all of those who argued, Mr. Speaker, that I should vote to approve the accord, believed that it was fundamentally flawed. Only two persons said to me, the Accord is right for this Province and for this country. All of those who said you should vote to approve it said that after they indicated that they believe that the Accord as well as the process was fundamentally and some said they believed flawed. AS my friend from the Strait of Bell Isle said, there is unanimity on this point. And I believe it. That they understand that about the content as well as the process in the Meech Lake discussions. Now what about these flaws? Mr. Speaker, my constituents had real reservations about the Distinct Society Clause. And most of them believe, while they do, they believe that Quebec is distinct in its laws, its language, and its culture, but while they believe that, they are concerned about having Provinces with different Legislative powers. They do not want the bigger, more powerful Provinces to be more equal in Legislative terms than others.

Mr. Speaker, may I add another comment about this Distinct Society Clause. I did not experience an anti-French feeling

in my District, I did not. Certainly there are linguistic animosities in parts of this country as there are religious and regional animosities, but to say that many persons in this Province or in this country are against the Meech Lake Accord primarily because they are anti-French or because they refuse to acknowledge the distinctiveness of Quebec is, I believe, wrong. I am convinced that it is wrong in my District.

Now my own view, Mr. Speaker, on this is that Quebec's desire for greater recognition of its cultural and linguistic distinctiveness and indeed for greater self-determination in these areas is legitimate. That has been my view for some time. I have argued that many of the cultural and the linguistic desires of Quebec are modest and should be addressed so that Quebec can become a full partner within Canada.

I understand, Mr. Speaker, how difficult it has been, and I have travelled extensively in Quebec, I understand, I believe, how difficult it has been for Quebec to maintain its cultural identity in the North American context, six or seven million versus three hundred million English-speaking North Americans. And I believe, Mr. Speaker, we must address these special needs of Quebec, but at the same time, we must assure for all Canadians a strong, unified country.

I might add, Mr. Speaker, that I am a supporter of a Canada Clause in the Constitution which recognizes the country as a federal state with three fundamental characteristics. First, the aboriginal people; secondly, English- and

French-speaking people; and thirdly, the multi-cultural communities. I wish that Clause had been included in these recent discussions.

Despite claims from some constitutional lawyers, I still have concerns about the impact of the Distinct Society Clause on the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The courts could very well rule that the Charter is subservient to that clause, and there are many who believe that.

My view is that constitutional rights must apply equally to all Canadians. If the Distinct Society Clause is adopted, the nature of our basic rights would, henceforth, vary, depending on the Province in which we live and the linguistic group to which we belong. The recognition of Quebec as a distinct society in the Constitution must not be permitted, I believe, to impact on the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We must not have, and I do not know who said this but I would like to give them credit, somebody said in this House, we must not have a patch work of basic human rights in Canada. In my view, the Accord should have included a clause stating that the Distinct Society Clause should not undermine the Charter.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that a defining dimension of Canada in the 1990s must be a set of basic rights and freedoms that apply to all Canadians.

Now to the question of Federal spending. The impact of the Accord on the spending power of the Federal Government. My hon. friend from Mount Pearl raised some questions on this, this morning.

Section 91 (3) of the Constitution Act, gave Parliament exclusive jurisdiction to enact laws for the purpose of raising money. This gave Canada a strong central Government, because the right to raise money is accompanied by the right to spend on programs of national interest. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that the Accord changes this by providing that the Federal Government financially compensates a province that chooses not to participate in new national cost-shared programs or even reform programs (inaudible).

Mr. Speaker, I believe that national shared programs are very important in this country. They have provided a mechanism for the development of a sense of belonging and community in Canada. In this country, we have built a national identity that is centered on a shared concern for human welfare. An identity that is enhanced when national programs help less prosperous provinces, provide social services that would otherwise be, beyond their reach.

I believe it was during the free trade debate, Mr. Speaker, a consensus developed that national social programs were one of the defining dimensions of this country. I know the Meech Lake Accord does not define what is a national cost-shared program. I raise the question, what about, what about day care, a national day care program in the future. What about regional development program? I believe, Mr. Speaker, that the ability to opt out of national cost-shared programs, particularly by the two big provinces in this country, the ability to opt out is provided for in the Accord and to receive compensation, could create a disincentive for the Federal

Government to initiate new programs like day care. It could or protect older ones like health care, if they are reformed. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that if Canada is to remain a cohesive, unified nation we all want it to be, it needs strong central Government to speak and act for all Canadians, to be the centre of gravity, to help resolve regional differences and disparities and to respond to national crises.

I will try to be brief in my comments about the Unanimity Clause. What impact I ask myself as I examine all the literature and talk to all the lawyers and read the materials, what impact will that clause have on the future of Constitutional reform in this country? Well, I am not in a position to generalize, and in answer to that question, I do believe, Mr. Speaker, that clause will have a negative impact on such things as Senate reform. I believe that we must have a reform Senate that helps balance political and economic decision making in this country, and this, I would suggest, is very unlikely, if not impossible with Meech and the add ons. A Triple E Senate will not be the panacea for all of our problems, nobody claims that, but I consider it, Mr. Speaker, an important element of constitutional reform.

I think, also, Mr. Speaker, we must make it possible for additional provinces to join the Confederation. Changing the amending formula to require unanimity with the establishment of new provinces, I would suggest, will virtually eliminate, certainly make very difficult, the possibility of the Northwest Territories and the Yukon becoming provinces.

Mr. Speaker, I feel very strongly that before the unanimity clause is enshrined in the Constitution, there should be extensive open public debate. I think it is essential in this area that that issue be subjected to open, extensive public debate.

Mr. Speaker, getting close to the end, there was one feeling that I got from my constituents that really bothered me, and that was their view that some form of sovereignty association, or even separation, was inevitable in Quebec. They sense that and they expressed it to me, and that really bothered me.

While the current political situation in Quebec is of serious concern to all of us, I must say, I am not a fatalist in this regard. I do believe that, with strong leadership from the Federal Government, we could have, and perhaps we still can, work out a solution that respects the legitimate desires of Quebec and retains what I consider the defining dimensions of a strong federalist state. Yes, there may be some short-term pain from rejecting the Accord, but surely, we in this country have the ability and the will to resolve the problems that result from this in the future. I genuinely hope, Mr. Speaker, that Quebecers will conclude - and I don't want to tell Quebecers what they should think - but I hope they will conclude that they have a better chance of maintaining their distinctiveness within the Canadian Confederation than outside.

Mr. Speaker, I am, indeed, concerned about what may happen if we vote to reject the Accord. I want my fellow-Canadians in Quebec

to believe, however, that saying 'no' to the Accord is not saying 'no' to Quebec, and I wish I could say that in French. I wish I could say that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Dr. Warren: Saying 'no' to the Accord is not saying 'no' to Quebec. I want Quebecers to hear that. I am fearful of what might happen if the Accord is rejected, I am, indeed, but building a constitution on fear may be a blueprint for disaster. Voting for Meech because of fear, Mr. Speaker, may buy peace in our time but, Mr. Speaker, we must ensure in constitution-making that we have peace in our children's and our grandchildren's time.

I sincerely believe that approving this Accord is, in the long-run, a greater threat to the Canadian dream than not approving it, a dream of trust, understanding and equality for all Canadians, irrespective of their cultural background, or where they reside. And, for this reason and for others, Mr. Speaker - unless the Prime Minister changes my mind; I want to respect his presence and I look forward to his presentation - for this reason and for others, Mr. Speaker, unless he changes my mind, I will be voting to reject this resolution. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Humber Valley.

Mr. Woodford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At first I would like to say that I was rather pleased, to say the least, from the three First Ministers who have already spoken here in this chamber on the

subject of Meech Lake. I would also like to thank the Premier for extending the invitation to those gentlemen. There is always a chance, even though some people may have their minds made up, but we are legislators, we are elected to do a job for our constituents firstly, and for the people of the Province next, and I guess you could add the people of Canada. We should not have tunnel vision, none of us can be guided like that, so it is good to have the Premiers yesterday, Premier Peterson, Premier McKenna, and Premier Devine so far in the Legislature to hear their views. There is always some little thing we can pick up and it is nice to be able to put the face on the name and we able to hear firsthand their concerns about their problems and their country as well. I can also appreciate, Mr. Speaker, the comments made by the members who have spoken so far in this Assembly and more specifically I would like to make reference to the member for St. John's West, the Member for Port de Grave, on the other side of the House, and the Member for Carbonear. The last time I sweat in the House of Assembly was the first day I came in here. I sweat for two reasons, one, because my knees were knocking when I made my first speech in the reply to the Speech from the Throne, and I mean knocking. The second, Mr. Speaker, was because of the very lights that are here today, and I am sweating again. Today it is not because my knees are knocking, but it is a combination of the lights and the subject which we are debating. This subject is evident and is very dear to the hearts of each and every member in this House. It is obvious from some of the reports coming back from members who have already

spoken today that it is dear to the very heart and soul of each and every Newfoundlander and Labradorian. I am no exception. I voted twice on Meech Lake. The first time I voted on it, I admit, I did not know but it was fit to eat. I was a new member, not a sound, it was introduced like any other piece of legislation. I do not even know if it was even reported in the papers that day. We went on again in 1989, I think, and voted in favour of Meech Lake, twice, and then I am put in the unenviable position of having to vote a third and final time. The third and final time will be a vote that I had to put a lot of soul searching into. There were so many opinions from leaders across this country, from the ordinary every day worker, the fishermen, the farmer, and the logger. This is an issue that has become a very emotional issue and everybody in this Province, not only lawyers, from the top down and from the bottom up, understand something about Meech Lake. They may not know it all, and I do not. I have been privy to the information on Meech Lake. I as a member in this House should have been privy to it and should have known the contents of Meech Lake and the repercussions it could have for this Province and for this country. I followed right through the First Ministers Conference back when Premier Peckford was there and when Premier Wells started as well. I take this opportunity to commend the Premier on a job, as far as I am concerned, well done. We as Legislators, regardless of what political stripe, PC, NDP or Liberal, always like to see our First Minister perform and perform well on behalf of the citizens of our Province. This was no exception.

But having said that, Mr. Speaker, I did not agree and do not today with all of the opinions held by him. If I did, I guess, and all of us over here did, I guess there would be no need having both sides of this House, we would be all together.

But having to come here today and debate and speak in the few minutes that I do have, you can speak forever on this one, we have twenty minutes, Mr. Speaker, to speak for the last time, as far as I am concerned, on Meech Lake. On the very destiny, the direction of our country and the finalization of an Accord that should have made our country unite instead of separate or split up.

I do not know if it will or not, as previous members have already said, I do not know. I hope it does not, as every other member here today, we all hope and pray, deep down regardless of what our other beliefs are, that nothing happens to this great country of ours because what happens in this country, no matter where, at some time or another is going to affect us back here in our Province, I was going to say little Province, but in our large Province with a small population. It affects us sooner or later.

And Mr. Speaker, I canvass my District different ways, I suppose, than some others, tried to do it on as much a personal note as I could, something that would be tangible, rather than on the phone. I got a good many on the phone because you just cannot get around thirteen municipalities in four or five days, you just cannot do it, and especially on a subject such as this, whereby if someone really wants to know the contents of Meech Lake or some of

the clauses identified and expanded upon, you have to take time and that takes plenty. I spent as long as an hour and a half on one call.

The majority of the people that I spoke to personally, if not at the outset but especially on the end of it, for different reasons said, look let's pass the Accord. I qualify it by saying for different reasons. Now some of those reasons were, let's get on with other things, it may not be that bad after all, it is only a building block, it is a part, it is a block in a foundation, a part of the foundation on which we must build a Province and a nation. We cannot do it in one kick at the cat, we cannot do it in two.

The Fathers of Confederation, in 1867, I am sure when the last person signed that document, he said to himself, and they said to themselves, this is a perfect document.

Let's come up another hundred and twenty years or less, a hundred and twelve years, to 1981-1982. The Prime Minister of the day had a good idea to bring back our Constitution, an excellent idea, it was done, but the political climate in Quebec at the time did not, I suppose, did not at that time, agree with the coming apart of the Canadian family and for obvious reasons.

Another Premier came on the scene in 1985, I believe it was 1985 or 1986, Premier Bourassa, and they identified, in 1986, that the rest of the Premiers in Canada invited Premier Bourassa in 1986 again to try to become a part of the Canadian family. They did just that, they met at a place called Meech Lake, they again came up

with an accord that they thought, at that time, was probably perfect. Little did they think that three years hence, just a short three years, out of total one hundred and twenty-three, that that document was probably not right, something else had to be added, someone was not satisfied. It wasn't only the addition of Quebec, and the bringing in of Quebec into the Canadian family. There were other reasons. There were women's rights, aboriginal rights. You have all kinds of reasons. Senate reform and I am sure that if that document was signed here today, that just two weeks from now, two months from now, it will be identified again that we need another amendment to our constitution.

It's an ongoing process. We are a young country as stated here by previous speakers and I echo the same comments. We are a young country. It requires constant constitutional change and in order to have constant constitutional change and in order to bring it about, we must have ten premiers and a Prime Minister and a compromising public who are willing to co-operate, if not we won't stay together long as a country. We cannot, we cannot, unless we compromise stay together. Well, it is obvious what happened in just the last six or seven months.

Mr. Speaker, most of my calls, phone calls, and there weren't very many, about thirty or thirty-five, came from outside the Province, usually directed by somebody else, I didn't mind that. But it did come from outside the Province. My correspondents, of which 90 per cent came from outside the Province. I didn't mind that

either. But, Mr. Speaker, when I was elected, back in 1985 as an MHA, and came in here and took the oath of office, it was clear that I was elected to make decisions on behalf of my constituents. I did not back away from that responsibility. I have never, since 1985, and I was elected again in 1989, backed away from that responsibility, and, Mr. Speaker, I will not back away from that responsibility today or tomorrow. I will not, again, Mr. Speaker. When I make my decision tomorrow, it won't be based on a poll, it won't be based on how many constituents I talked to, it won't be based on how many yeses or nos. It will be based on, Mr. Speaker, what I think is best for this Province, best for my constituent and best for this country.

Am I going to go out next week, Mr. Speaker, prime example, Bill 53, am I going to go out and poll my district and ask everybody how they feel about it and then if the vote 95 per cent and say, 'Rick, defeat that, I am going to come in here and defeat it? Am I going to keep on going every time a decision has got to be made and do a poll and talk and consult? Yes! I am going to talk and consult. I won't be doing polls, but I will be acting on behalf of my constituents - I will pay that price, Mr. Speaker, I will pay that price down the road, I took that responsibility when I ran and if they want constitution, I have one to, Sir. Constitution of Canada, but I have one.

I have to live with the decision that is going to be made here tomorrow and I don't want anybody, anybody trying to suggest how I should do it or not do it, and I am saying that, not as a Member of

the House of Assembly, I am talking about being swayed and backed into a corner, so to speak. Constructive debate, arguing, I didn't participate in it. Constructive debate, yes.

But I, as an individual, and I would like to quote, Mr. Speaker from a - I guess a lot of the members have seen it and a lot of people have seen it. It is a quotation from Thomas Burke, a speech to the electors of Bristol. 'Your representative, oh you, not his industry only but his judgement and he betrays and stood up serving you to be sacrificed to your opinion'.

Mr. Speaker, when decision time comes tomorrow, we all have to stand in our place and do just that, make a decision. Granted, it is going to be the hardest decision, I say, even going back to the flag debate. Some members here took part in that and it would probably be a harder decision than the flag debate itself. Mr. Speaker, we will all have to do that and live with our conscience after. My how time flies. I have most of my time gone, fifteen minutes gone out of twenty. Mr. Speaker, the word I hear around the Province from politicians, and from some people who are opposed to the Meech Lake Accord itself is the word fundamentally flawed. Now, fundamentally is a very strong word as far as I am concerned. We can debate this forever and a day, about the fundamentally, and the flawed part of it, I guess. If someone could point out to me, we can go on forever and a day. I will never forget when I was put in as Minister and I had to take on the Sprung thing, the first thing I was faced with the next morning. I went in this room and

there were ten around, half of which, I think, were lawyers. I sat down and I listened, I listened and I listened for three hours. I would say I got twenty minutes in out of the whole thing, steady beating their chops, steady giving opinions. How in the name of God can anybody make a decision? If I go in a courtroom and there is a crowd there, I have the lawyer there for the prosecution, I have one there for the defence, and the two of them are in the courtroom all day long trying to make liars out of each other. Is that right? Is it not true, on the same set of principles but one is trying to prove that the other one is wrong, and at the end of the day one comes out right. Now, I said when I came out of that meeting that morning, I am sorry, I do not know what you are used to but I know what you are going to get used to. In any meetings from now on one lawyer comes in this room, one and one only. I cannot go forever and a day listening to the opinions of lawyers and then try to come to a conclusion myself. It would just mesmerize you, so right of the bat that was fixed, and I never had any problems after, believe you me. Now, my time is pretty well up and I do not want to take away from anybody else. Mr. Speaker, there is an inscription over the Capital Building in the State of California which reads, 'Give me men to match my mountains.' If there was ever a time in this Province, and in this country, and we have plenty of them, I know, that need men to match our mountains because we have them too, we have lots of them, it is now. It is now, and we do not have long to try and find some of the men that are going to do that. I say we have twenty-four

hours left. I am sorry, but that read men, so I am sorry, they are going to have to change that to men and women from now on and I apologize to my hon. colleagues. In any case Premier Peterson said it well yesterday when he said we will have two tests, the test of conscience and the test of history. If anybody ever had anybody in their family diagnosed as being very, very sick then later on being diagnosed as being terminally ill, at first there is a chance because everybody is elated when they are told there can be some treatment. They can be treated so all of a sudden everybody says, well, there is a chance. Then all of sudden they are told, I am sorry, but this is terminal, there is no chance. All of a sudden members of the family, friends, relatives, you hear them say, I heard it lately because I have had a member of the family terminally ill. And they said, if only I had had to spend more time, if only I had to have done this, I only I had to have done that. But we only have a few weeks to do it. Ladies and gentlemen, we have less than twenty-four hours, as far as I am concerned, to spend with our Canadian family. Let's not make a mistake, let's ratify the Meech Lake Accord tomorrow.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Bellevue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Barrett: Mr. Speaker and hon. colleagues of this hon House, I stand in my place today to offer my opinions and concern on the most important issue facing this country. I must, however, admit that I stand here full of mixed emotions. This is the result of a

very intense week of consultation, assessment and internal discourse.

Like my friends on both sides of this House, Mr. Speaker, I have had to use every occasion given to me to gauge public opinion on the Meech Lake Accord and the understanding reached in Ottawa nearly two weeks ago. I realize that many of us have had it up to here with Meech Lake. I know many people who just want the debate to end so that this Province and this country can get on to other important issues.

A constitution is a very abstract thing, Mr. Speaker. People in this Province and in this country are more concerned with things which affect their every day lives, the state of the fishery, and the general concern over the economy. Mr. Speaker, however, many more have grave concerns of where Meech Lake will take this country in this next one hundred years. People with very real concerns about our Province's future in this nation. Still there is another group, Mr. Speaker, who believe that without Meech Lake, this country will not have another hundred years.

With this debate whirling around us on all levels and in numerous areas of this country, we in Newfoundland and Labrador cannot help but feel the pressure of the decision we will make this week. That is why those of us who will have to make that decision, all fifty-one of us on behalf of the people of this Province and this country, have had to take every opportunity possible to offer our views and to gauge the response from the general public.

I think, Mr. Speaker, this is very important that we, as Members of

this House of Assembly, address the consequences of the decision which is now before us. The consequences which are being presented to thousands of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians as they pass they concerns onto those of us who will be voting tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, it is very, very important to look at where we stand today in terms of the debate. Some people are confused as to what happened in Ottawa while the Premier was there. Others have a misunderstanding as to what his signature on the document really means. It is important that these issues are clarified before decisions are made.

Our Premier left Ottawa two weeks ago, after a week-long dinner meeting with an understanding on the Meech Lake Accord. It was, however, an agreement which he could not support. Deep in his heart, he knew that the agreement which was being forged was one he could not agree with. He knew he could not take it back to the people of Newfoundland and say he got what he wanted, that we can rest assured of our place in the nation and in the type of nation we are building for our children. Having reached that decision, Mr. Speaker, he realized that he, alone, could no longer decide what road this country would take into the year 2000 and beyond. This realization became more obvious to him, as Manitoba and New Brunswick moved on side to adopt the Accord. The Premier decided that he would have to take the results of the meeting in Ottawa back to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. This would allow them to decide for themselves, either through a referendum or a free

vote in the House of Assembly, where they felt the country should go. He offered an invitation to all Canadians, particularly the First Ministers, and we are about to hear the First Minister of Canada speak in the next short while, where these people stood, and where all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians stood.

The Premier's signature on that agreement was just that, a promise to bring the arrangement back to the people for their approval or disapproval.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier summed up what every Newfoundlander and Labradorian and what every member of this hon. House has to do, in his closing remarks at the First Ministers' Conference and dinner in Ottawa, and I quote: 'I ask you to consider with generosity the position of Quebec. I ask you to consider with deep concern the expressions of concern that you will hear from the other First Ministers and the people of Canada about the future of Canada, and I ask you to respond with concern and generosity, but don't give up your right to make the decision on the basis of your conscience.'

The Premier came home to this Province confident of his choice, knowing full-well the importance of the issue. Due to time constraints, it was impossible to take the preferred route of a referendum so, with the approval of the caucus, brought the question of the House of Assembly and will allow a free vote in this Assembly tomorrow.

Within a matter of hours, the focus of a nation turned to the members of our House of Assembly. The task which has been put before us is one which none of us take

lightly. For the past week, Mr. Speaker, we have been in our districts conferring with our constituents, and these people have put their trust in us to make important decisions, but I don't think there is any other decision that we will ever make as important as this one.

I think I speak for all members of this hon. House when I say that we are finding there is a great deal of concern in this Province. Mr. Speaker, this concern takes many forms. It is, however, a primary concern for the future of this country. I think that if anyone was indifferent to the level of support for Canada in Newfoundland before this debate, they now realize just how strong Canadian nationalism is in this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, a majority of our fellow-citizens are quite confident that the decision made by our parents and grandparents nearly half a century ago to join the great country of Canada was, indeed, the right choice. Keeping that in mind, it is easier to understand the opinions we have been receiving from all around the Province through phone surveys, public meetings, door-to-door canvassing, mail and fax messages, day-to-day contact with the constituents. Newfoundlanders have made their apprehensions, interest and concerns known.

Mr. Speaker, there is certainly a viable argument put forward by those who would like the Accord to pass. As with most the first priority in making the decision is the future of Canada. They feel that should Meech Lake fail to pass (inaudible) harm would be done to the Canadian characteristics of tolerance. The

fear that Quebec will no longer feel welcome in this family. And this will revive the separatists movement in Quebec. Mr. Speaker, ultimately, the fear is that Quebec will separate, and that Canada without Quebec is not a viable option. People are looking down the road and those of us in Newfoundland are use to going down the road and looking down the road. And we are looking down the road after Meech Lake. They are wondering what kind of Canada we will live in. More importantly, Mr. Speaker, they are wondering what kind of Canada they are leaving for their children? Some of the mail that we have received in our office reflects these concerns. The local business men say that the consequences are staggering. If Quebec separates Canada as we know it will disappear. The trust and leadership position we have in the eyes of the world will disappear. The value of our dollar and reach of her manufacturing sector will drop. Another comment from a concerned citizen said, lets be united as a family first and then have our constructive arguments within our family group of Provinces. We have so much to loose if we are not able to disagree and solve our problems through debate. Mr. Speaker, these are legitimate concerns. Not the result of fear mongering or fatalism, but the true feelings of some of our citizens. It is important that we as Members of the House of Assembly address all these concerns as we struggle towards a decision. On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, there has been a very strong outpouring of support for the Premier, among those who see Meech Lake as the first nail in the Canadian coffin. Many believe that the power given to Quebec will further

increase national tension. They believe that this tension will inevitably lead to the breakup of Canada. They are concerned that they will have to pay the price to keep Quebec happy, and should Quebec separate there mainder of the country will have to live within an ineffective constitution. The anti Meech groups, Mr. Speaker, have very real concerns about the kind of country Meech Lake will provide for those outside of Quebec. The fear that we are doing irreversible harm to the fabric of our nation. That we are moving towards effecting the primary legal document of Canada with something recognized as being flawed. Canadians do not want to play Russian roulette with this important. Just as there are feelings in Quebec that Confederation has not been working for them. There are similar concerns in other parts of this country. People are calling for a new approach to the management of this nation. Like eastern Europe, Mr. Speaker, Canadians want new arrangements for all who share in the priviledge of Canadian citizenship. The great fear is that Meech Lake will prevent the settlement of new arrangements. For all of those who feel left out including the aboriginal people, women, multicultural groups, the smaller Provinces, the Anglophones in Quebec and the Francophones outside of Quebec. I would like to read for some of you the letters received over the past week asking us to vote against the Accord. One man said, the Meech Lake Accord will create a constitutional straight jacket, and has the potential to permit the Quebec Government to infringe on fundamental human rights in the name of preservation of the French language. Another person from

Trepassey, Canada is a hugh nation and one whose problems are complex and deep routed. The constitution of a country is a reflection of the people of that country, and is something which must be handled with the greatest of care. Finally, from Ontario this note. I would like to express that I am deeply concerned about the future of Canada. The ratification of this Agreement I am convinced will lead to the eventual break up of this country and not the other way around, Quebec will gradually move towards full independence. Others in our society will demand to be recognized as distinct and an English-speaking Canadian back lash fooled by extremists will further erode our will to live as one.

These are only a sample, Mr. Speaker, of the responses every Member of this House of Assembly has received from all over Canada within the last week or so. They are not the opinions of anti-French, rather they are the thoughts and hopes of a great number of Canadians for their country.

Mr. Speaker, there is one thing that all Canadians can agree on is the poor process by which this Accord was developed, and any of the other supplement agreements. Canadians are firm in their resolve to never allow the pressure cooker style of negotiation again, particularly where the Constitution of the nation is concerned. Never before has Canadian sensibility been abused so much by those elected to provide peace and order and good government.

Canadians, Mr. Speaker, are the most democratic people in the world. We believe in public

debate and the importance of negotiation and accommodation. Our history is based on those characteristics and they are fundamental to our national identity.

Canadians discourage violence. We have developed as a nation through peaceful democratic means, not through revolution and war. While other countries including our closest allies celebrate wars of independence and revolution, we can feel secure in knowing that should history repeat itself, our democratic principles will prevail.

This understanding, Mr. Speaker, it boggles the mind trying to understand the Federal Government crisis management style of government. From day one, the Prime Minister and his Cabinet has tried to oppose and squash all opposition of the Accord. There was a take it or leave attitude. I do not know if they were surprised or not when Canadians started to choose the last option.

Meech Lake should have been allowed to evolve over the last three years. There was more than enough time to allow proper consultation. It is better to work out the potential problems of this and any other accord before it is entrenched, otherwise we will find ourselves in the same position ten years from now, that is, a vibrant nation with a lame Constitution. If that happens, we will have to go through the same gut-wrenching experience we are going through here today. No country, no matter how strong its national character, can survive those pressures every ten years and still expect to advance politically, economically and

culturally.

We have to address the whole process from the beginning to the end. Governments should not be the only catalyst for constitutional reform. The constitution belongs to the people and as such, they have the right to have more direct input. We need to address the ideas of the national conventions and referendums as greater sources of public contribution. Public hearings and commissions are also viable alternatives. We can no longer rest assured that First Ministers Conference are the most effective form of Federal/Provincial negotiations.

Mr. Speaker, the First Ministers conferences is a relatively new concept in Canadian federalism. There is a definite need for this type of co-operation in the process of constitutional reform. They are not, however, and should not be the last source of decision making in this country. That is the exclusive jurisdiction of the Canadian people. Whatever comes out of the debate by First Ministers should be brought to Canadians first for their approval, additions or alterations or disapprovals. It is then up to the Legislature to address the wishes of the people.

If in the future these needed reforms to become the norm, then there is no telling how far Canada will advance as a democratic state. One thing is for certain, the Canadian people will never allow the current style to prevail again, if, for no other reason, Mr. Speaker, the Meech Lake Debate has been useful because it has educated Canadians. They are now much more aware of the importance of the Constitution and of their

right to have a say in this Constitution.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I have consulted widely within my district. I deliberately didn't call any public meetings because I think, as a politician, if I call public meetings, I think I have a tendency to sway public opinion. I did an independent poll in my district and most of the people in my district want me to vote to reject the Meech Lake Accord. I think that I have an obligation to the people of Bellevue district who sent me to this House of Assembly and the people in Bellevue district understand the implications of the Meech Lake Accord, and despite what some people may say, that the Newfoundland people don't understand what's in Meech Lake, we have discussed this for a long, long time, they read about it, they have heard it on radio, on tv, and there has been a lot of discussion. And to our fellow Canadians watching, one of the greatest sports in Newfoundland is, politics and people talk a lot about politics.

I was on a walk on Gooseberry Cove the other day, talking to fishermen. Granted, they were concerned about there wasn't any fish, they were concerned about the prices of lobster, they were concerned that there wasn't any fish this year and what's going to happen, but they were also very, very concerned about the future of this Province and the future of this country. And as I travelled around the district, I didn't go out in my district specifically for Meech Lake, but the House of Assembly opened for the last three months, there were people in my district who wanted to see me and

as I went around, I met some of the people who had requested to see me over the last while.

I remember getting a letter a week or so ago from a senior citizen in my district who wanted to see me and when I went to see him he thought I was coming to talk about Meech Lake, and I said to him, you wrote me about a week ago and you had a problem, do you want to discuss it and he couldn't remember what he had written me about, he was so wrapped up with Meech Lake. This was a gentleman eighty-two years old, he said, Mr. Barrett, this Meech Lake is really serious business, I want you, when you vote in the House of Assembly, to vote against the Meech Lake Accord. I said, what about, if I vote against Meech Lake and you lose your pension? He said Mr. Barrett, if they take my pension, let them have it, he said I will go out on the sand bar and stab flat fish for the rest of my life, but I think we should stand up and make Newfoundland an equal part of this Canadian Federation, and that's a gentleman who is eighty-two and we say that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians do not understand what's in Meech Lake. I think we are putting Newfoundlanders and Labradorians down, because, as I said a few minutes ago, politics and the issues revolving around politics in Newfoundland is the favourite sport, and Newfoundlanders do understand the implications of Meech Lake, whether it should be passed and whether we should vote for it or against it.

I take great pleasure in representing the District of Bellevue, and it is interesting to note, for the people who are not familiar, that the Hibernia development that is going to take

place in this Province, and the gravity-based platforms will be constructed within the District of Bellevue. And when I travelled throughout the district, I also told people that there may be problems with Hibernia, and the message that I got clear was, 'Regardless, Percy, we want you to vote to reject the Meech Lake Accord. And it is with great pleasure, tomorrow, that when the vote is called, I will reject this Accord. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.'

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move that the House now adjourn during pleasure. I understand it will be a few minutes before the Prime Minister comes.

Mr. Speaker: I might, just for the security of the House, ask people in the galleries if they would remain in their places, and members could, as we don't want to block the main entrance. The Prime Minister should arrive at any moment. Members, of course, could recess to their common rooms or stay where we are, in which case, the Chair will ring the bell when the Prime Minister arrives.

All those in favour, 'Aye'.

Some Hon. Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: Those against, 'Nay', carried.

Mr. Prime Minister, on behalf of all hon. Members it gives me a great pleasure and an honour to welcome you here today. I don't recall the last visit that we have

had from a Prime Minister in this Legislature, but I am sure I am safe in saying that we have not had a visit from a Prime Minister on a more important, significant and auspicious occasion.

We extend to you a warm and cordial welcome. I would also like to welcome in the Speaker's Gallery the hon. John Crosbie, the hon. Ross Reid and Senator Lowell Murray.

The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, Prime Minister it gives me a particular pleasure this afternoon to extend, on behalf of all members on both sides of this Legislature, and indeed on behalf of all of the people of this province a very warm and sincere welcome to you. I don't know, as the Speaker said, that on any occasion in our one hundred and thirty-five year history of Responsible Government in this land of ours, that our Legislature has had a more significant debate than the debate that is going on now. And it is indeed a great honour for the Legislature to have the Prime Minister of Canada address the members and express his views and the views that he feels represents the views of the Nation on this major issue.

It is important and I say to you we are indeed grateful for the honour that you have done us. It also gives me an opportunity Prime Minister to reciprocate some of the warm welcome and the very sincere and kind and courteous treatment that you extended to me when I was in Ottawa a couple of weeks ago. All the World knows that we had some difficult sessions. A seven day long dinner meeting is quite a long dinner

meeting and there were some very difficult sessions, but, as I indicated in speaking Saturday night at the closing of that session, I acknowledged the great courtesy with which you treated me personally throughout those difficult discussions, and I welcome this opportunity to extend a similar courtesy and respect to you.

Thank you again most sincerely for doing us this great honour, and would you now be so kind as to address the members. Thank you Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Mulroney: Mr. Speaker, Monsieur Premier Ministre, chers collègues, and Ladies and Gentlemen. I am here today because Premier Wells thought it important that members of the House of Assembly hear directly from the Prime Minister of Canada on a matter of such fundamental importance to the Nation. The Premier and I have frequently discussed this possibility over the last few days and I have been persuaded by the arguments of Premier Wells that, I should come. In consequence I am pleased to accept his gracious invitation, and I am honoured as a fellow Parliamentarian to speak from the floor of this House. It is a genuine honour that you do me and I accept with the greatest of pleasure.

I suppose, to be direct about it, the question arises, "Why Meech Lake?" Well, in 1980, in the province of Quebec there was a referendum that went right to the core of our citizenship. The question really was, when you stripped it down, "Do you want to be a Canadian? Yes or No." It was worded a little differently, a little more elegantly, but that's

what it meant. "Do you want to associate with Canada or do you want to be a Canadian?" and I want to tell you, for one who went through that referendum, along with almost seven million others, this is not an experience that I either enjoyed or I propose to repeat, if it can be avoided.

That Quebec referendum came out 60/40 in favour of Canada, but I should tell you that the vote was about 50/50 with regard to French-speaking Quebecers. The balance came from other groups in the province of Quebec who voted, as you know, very, very strongly in favour of Canada.

On the eve of that referendum in 1980 the Prime Minister of Canada in, what I have always viewed as a most significant and important and helpful speech, promised to Quebecers a renewed Federalism. (Inaudible) le quatorze mai, 1980, le Premier Ministre du Canada a dit ceci aux Quebecois, and here's a translation, "We are telling you and the other provinces that we won't accept that a NO be interpreted by you as an indication that everything is fine and can remain as it was before". Unquote. Quebecers, therefore, voted for Constitutional renewal and reform. In 1981-82 the Constitution was patriated but without Quebec's endorsement for reasons that were gone into yesterday by Premier Peterson and Premier McKenna in their excellent remarks to you and I won't go into it today.

In 1985 a Federalist, Liberal Premier was elected in the province of Quebec and one of his firm commitments to the people of the province of Quebec was that he would seek to reintegrate the province of Quebec back into the

Canadian family. You may remember that, at last count in 1981-82 the then, Parti Quebecois government, of Quebec had some twenty-two conditions, almost all of them unacceptable. Mr. Bourassa, a committed Liberal and a committed Federalist came forward with some five or six points in May of 1986. In August of 1986 the Premiers of Canada met in Edmonton and under the Chairmanship of Premier Getty agreed in the Edmonton Declaration that constitutional paralysis could be avoided in Canada by the initiation of a Quebec Round, which would result, hopefully, in the inclusion of the province of Quebec on terms that would be reasonable for Canada and acceptable to all Quebecers.

That then gave rise to discussions from August of 1986 to the First Ministers Conference in November of 1986 where all of the First Ministers asked again that this be initiated and I and Senator Murray began to work on the possibility of a constitutional round.

We met in April of 1987 at Meech Lake and we met again on the third of June at the Langevin Block, having finalized the Meech Lake Accord, signed by ten Premiers out of ten, representing four different political parties from Newfoundland and Labrador to British Columbia, endorsed on two separate occasions by all three parties in the Canadian House of Commons. That was what happened to the Meech Lake Accord in 1987 and here we are today in 1990, which I suppose, if you apply the test of the reasonable man to the situation, gives rise to the question, at least one, "What is in the Meech Lake Accord? What is in this document?" Well, it's hardly revolutionary. It is in the tradition of over thirty years of

constitutional discussions.

Yesterday in Ottawa when I spoke to the House of Commons on a resolution I had been preceded by Andre Ouellett, a Liberal Minister for many years and a classmate of mine thirty years ago at Université Laval in Quebec City, and I remarked as I listened to Andre finish his comments that he and I discussed these same matters thirty years ago and much of which you see in the Meech Lake Accord was discussed at the Congres des Affaires Canadiennes at Université Laval in 1961 and 1962. A participant as well was Marcel Prud'Homme, the Member for St. Denis, and so this is not revolutionary.

Nobody invented anything at Meech Lake. It was clearly in the tradition of twenty years of Constitutional discussions, and the five or six points that we considered and that we dealt with that are embodied in the Meech Lake Accord are, first, a Distinct Society. Most people, by the way, forget to mention the two key words that follow it, a Distinct Society within Canada, within Canada. A Distinct Society where the Premier of Quebec undertook to bind Quebec closer to Canada, within Canada, and also the Distinct Society is tied to the linguistic duality which includes very clearly a definition of the English-Speaking minority in the province of Quebec as the fundamental characteristic. Protection of minorities, which we don't always perfectly do, but in a civilized country like Canada we have, over the years, in the decades, done rather well in comparison to others. The protection of the rights of the English-speaking minority in the Province of Quebec and

French-speaking minorities elsewhere is one of the most compelling obligations of Legislators anywhere. It gives rise to the bilingual nature of Canada, the multi-cultural concept of Canada which speaks to a fundamental virtue of the nation. I believe that of all of the qualities that one can associate with a democratic nation, tolerance is the highest one of all, respect for someone else's religion or someone else's cultural differences, linguistic differences, respect for his minority or her minority status is the hallmark of a civilized society. Without it, one sees rancor and division and malice and those are the seeds that debilitate and eventually crush the spirit of democracy and all of the values on which it is based.

And so we talked about a distinct society, something that has been around since 1774. In the Constitutional debates of 1865, Sir John A. MacDonald referred to the individuality of Quebec, quote, unquote, "Read distinctiveness for individuality, substitute the word distinctiveness for individuality and you have a description of what Sir John A. said in the winter months of 1865 when he was talking about the kind of Canada he was seeking to build.

And to paraphrase the Confederation debates, Sir John said and this is clearly a paraphrase, "If I had my brothers, I would have a unitary state, with no Provincial Legislatures really, with one government", and as he modestly allowed, with him in charge. And that was his view until he ran into Cartier and Cartier said, "Oui, mais non, oui mais si vous voulez un Canada. Si

vous voulez la Confédération, il vaut falloir que vous respectiez les principes de base, du bas Canada devenu maintenant le Quebec. Sir John you must respect the individuality to which you have referred, different language, different culture, in those days, a different religion which was so important then. A different set of laws, and so Sir John came to the view that Canada could only emerge from a hodge-podge of Provinces going every which way and into a great nation which would extend from there to the British Columbia coast, it there was an acceptance and a recognition of this individuality. It would never have gotten off the ground had there not been that mature judgment, but by and large, as I say very much in paraphrase, is recognized there today.

The Supreme Court entrenched for the first time in the Constitution, Provincial say in nominations, but Ottawa has the final word, the Senate as well. What is wrong with that? The fact that I, as Prime Minister, would consult the Attorney General and the Premier of Newfoundland and that he would provide lists, if we were going to appoint a Newfoundlander to the Supreme Court of Canada, five of the most outstanding jurists in Newfoundland, he would only bring forward people of the highest quality. The Bar Association is involved, the Provincial Attorney General is involved, the Federal Minister of Justice is involved. You have seen from my appointments to the Supreme Court of Canada that there is one criterion and one criterion only, and that is excellence. I expect nothing less from any of the Provincial Premiers and indeed have received

nothing less. And in all cases of the six, soon to be seven, appointments, I believe I have made to the Supreme Court of Canada, in all cases I have followed the formula in the Meech Lake Accord even though I am not obliged to do so. For a very simple reason, I believe it produces the best judges, and this country needs the finest Judiciary, particularly since the Constitution of 1982 and the impact of the Charter.

The amending formula, well, it adds some matters to the 1982 unanimity provision. We did not dream it up, by the way. They were there in 1982, it adds some matters to them but 750 remains the general rule. On immigration, it entrenches some of the agreements such as the existing agreements, that came about as a result of negotiations under the previous Government called "Cullen-Culture". It entrenches those agreements with six other Provinces I believe, including one with the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. And the spending power for the first time in the history of Canada, it confirms in our Constitution the capacity of the Federal Government in areas of exclusively Provincial jurisdiction. This is a gain for Canada. It is a rearrangement obviously. But it is a gain for Canada. It affirms for the first time the capacity of the Government of Canada to enter areas of exclusively provincial jurisdiction. Hitherto, off the record, for Federal Governments without all kinds of confrontations and abuse. There you have it. There you have by and large the implications of the Meech Lake Accord, I mentioned as well, with the Supreme Court, the Senate.

I am not offended by the idea of consulting Clyde Wells with regard to an outstanding list of five Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who might serve in the Senate, from which I would make as Prime Minister of Canada, the final determination. I think it gives more legitimacy to National institutions. And surely there is nothing offensive in it. In 1978 the previous government, in different circumstances, offered the Provinces the capacity to appoint 50 percent of all of the Members of a second chamber. Not to submit for consideration to appoint directly 50 percent of the Member of a second chamber, which is of course the Senate. I make simply the following point, with regard to Meech Lake, before anybody is horrified; all five points of Meech Lake were offered either constitutionally or administratively to Quebec in the past, sometimes on less and sometimes on more generous terms. Sometimes phrased differently, sometimes placed differently in a proposed constitution, but every single provision of the Meech Lake Accord was discussed with and offered in different circumstances at different times in the past. So I think the people would be hard placed to really find anything revolutionary in the Meech Lake Accord, or anything that is offensive to the concept of a workable Federalism. In a country like ours, which was best, for example, put one day anecdotally to me by Mrs. Thatcher. We had met in Vancouver, she had flown across Canada from the United Kingdom, hour after hour to get to Vancouver. She was remarking on the extraordinary nature of Canada and its vast expanse and how difficult it must be, in two languages with this size of a country, to govern. And

she said, "You know Brian, in forty-five minutes I can get from number 10 to any place in the Kingdom". And I said, well Margaret, in forty-five minutes I cannot get to the airport, and there you have one of the reasons for Federalism. One of the fundamental reasons for federalism, because of the extraordinary nature of our geography, the vast expanses, the different demands of different languages and different cultures. The demands of Labrador West could not be more different than those of Southern Ontario. And it requires the input and the concern and the consideration of representatives from Labrador to bring these to national attention. Otherwise, in a purely unitary, homogenized society, they would be lost. I remember full-well, it didn't happen ten days ago, it happened ten years ago, that on the issue of the Churchill Falls-Quebec Hydro contract, I went into French-speaking Quebec and I spoke out very clearly on behalf of the Newfoundland and Labrador position. I said that contract was flawed and that contract had to be changed because it was unfair to Newfoundland and Labrador. I didn't say that ten days ago, I said it ten years ago, when Jacques Parizeau was the Minister of Finance and the Government of Rene Levesque in Quebec. And I said it because I believe that the interests of Newfoundland and Labrador had been badly served by that contract, and while it may be legal, contracts can be legal, but they can lack in equity and fairness and justice; same reason, for example, that, as the Premier and I have chatted many times, my interest in the promotion of Hibernia is not because I view Hibernia as barrels

of oil, although it is that, I view Hibernia as dignity and opportunity for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Hibernia is a unique opportunity, finally to get a quality of opportunity for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. That is why I said what I did a decade ago, to defend the Newfoundland position in Quebec, in regard to hydro, and that is why I have done what I have done over the last five-and-a-half years, as Prime Minister of Canada, to try to make Hibernia happen. Because it is more than barrels of oil, it is dignity.

I believe that Clyde Wells is right, and Brian Peckford before him, when they said, 'We don't want to receive equalization, we want a pay equalization of the rest of Canada. We are tired of receiving cheques from Ottawa, and we want fairness and greater opportunity, and that, I believe, is something all Canadians agree upon.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Prime Minister Mulroney: Well, then, what happened then? We did this in 1987, here we are in 1990. Well, Article 39(2) of the 1982 Constitution provided for a three-year time frame, within which Meech Lake had to be ratified by all Legislatures, otherwise, it would fail. As of last week, three provinces still had to ratify it and then, late last week, I believe, on Friday, New Brunswick ratified, bringing to eight provinces out of ten, those who had ratified, representing 94 per cent of the population of Canada. As we speak today, those Governments, representing 94 per cent of the population of Canada, have spoken out and ratified the Meech Lake

Accord.

We have never been through a three-year delay before, because it is the first time it has ever been applied. I think we all agreed that we are going to have to revisit that one; it is hopeless to have that kind of a delay placed upon constitutional change. If that is allowed to remain as it is, I seriously doubt if you will ever get a constitutional amendment again in Canada, and I will tell you why, because three years is a long time. What was saluted universally on the morning of June 3, 1987 as a symbol of unity, the Meech Lake Accord, has become tarnished.

Meech Lake came under growing attack as a giveaway to Quebec, although most of its provisions apply equally to all of the other provinces, and Meech Lake also became a lightning rod for much misunderstanding and dissatisfaction across the country, with a number of situations, a number of events, including the Federal Government and our policies. Meech Lake got all mixed up with Free Trade and the GST, high interest rates and me, as Leader of the Federal Government. This happens in politics. A leader has to lead, a leader has to decide. When you decide, you must choose, and when you choose, instinctively, there is alienation in regard to those whose projects or whose positions were not chosen. And, so, I am with legislators here, irrespective of politics. We have all been up and down and we have all been in and out, and we know one thing, that there is very, very little job security in these jobs.

And, so, unpopularity, that attaches to all of us at different points of time, over a three year period came to, I think, unfairly colour, if I may say, a generous and impressive instrument of unity, because Meech wound up carrying baggage for which it was not responsible, where the responsibility should have more fairly been laid at others doorsteps, including mine. But we were locked into the three year delay and matters festered. Problems that had nothing to do with Meech became Meech and so a simple straightforward constitutional device, devised to make Canada whole again became burdened down in an unfair manner, and as a result of events over the last three years, the true value of Meech has been obscured and in some cases lost.

Some people now say, repudiate Meech, irrespective of the consequences. Others in Quebec, now say, a once noble achievement and a symbol of unity has been seriously diminished. As French Canadians, it is now said, we have been on this land as a founding people for 350 years and we never thought a Constitution of Canada would ever be patriated without our willing consent and as a result of Meech, it is said, we Quebecers, are delighted to rejoin the Canadian Constitutional family, but we won't accept to be frisked at the door and we won't accept to be given a test of constitutional purity.

French Canadians, Quebecers are saying, we want to love Canada in our way as we have over centuries but give us the opportunity to love Canada together. And so the conclusion from a lot of French Canadians in Quebec, is we signed Meech in good conscience, we said

yes to Canada. We have a right now to expect that its provisions would be honoured by all other signatories.

A word, Mr. Speaker, and Premier, and friends, about consequences. Everything we do in this life brings with it consequences. Some good, some bad, some woeful and some unintended. We all have to live with the consequences of our own decisions. If Burke had ever thought that what we should do, is run around and ask our voters what they think, he would never have written his letter to the electors at Bristol. As Members of Parliament, we are elected to stand up and to take the heat and decide and so we must accept the consequences of our actions.

Let me review very quickly some of them that I say. First, let us consider the consequences of failure of Meech Lake. I think that those consequences are probably very difficult to predict. I don't know of anyone who could do it with great accuracy. But there are some general conclusions that one can deal with, with some degree of certainty. Constitutional paralysis, sadness and dismay across the country. Negative signals to international markets, to international bankers, to international investors. Negative signals around the world, to the great money pools around the world needed for investment, negative signals because in their minds, political stability is king. And money moves, investment moves in search and in quest of political stability, so there would be some degree of certainty, I think, about some of those consequences. Then there would be, if I could classify it rather differently, there would be another area of

what I would call growing probability. I could not be any more direct than that. I think under this heading you would find a rising sense of rejection in Quebec, and a growing support for sovereignty association. In this mornings La Presse, as I was coming down, 57 per cent of Quebecers said they would support sovereignty association, and 63 per cent of French speaking Canadians in Quebec this morning said they would support sovereignty association. Polls are polls, I do not know where that would be in a year or two, I can just tell you what is published this morning. We all share something fundamental in common in these Legislatures, which is why I am very happy to be here. Clyde Wells and Tom Rideout have a lot of things at variance, one with the other, and I have a lot at variance with Herb Gray or Audrey McLaughlin, Grant Devine with Roy Romanow, and David Peterson with Bobby Ray, but all of us have one thing in common, that the people who seek to replace us as First Ministers love Canada as much as we do. Every single Leader of the Opposition in this country is profoundly and deeply committed to the wellbeing of a united Canada with one exception, and the exception is Mr. Parizeau in the province of Quebec. Mr. Parizeau's program states very specifically in article number one that they are committed to one overriding capital idea, and that is the dismemberment of Canada. They are not being coy, they are being very, very, direct, and so this raises with it the growing inevitability of perhaps another referendum. Mr. Parizeau said, and he is an honest man, he says very bluntly that if he wins the next election, he is looking very

good, he is going to have a referendum. He is not going to be cute, he is going to put the question straight out. Do you want to separate? Aye or Nay. Then, of course, all of us are going to have some decisions to make, because the Meech Lake Accord is designed to avoid any future referendum. I do not want to go through another one. I was there in a minor role in 1980 and I want to tell you point blank that is not something, when you are talking about the future of your country, and the legacy you want to leave to your children, this is not something that you would want to go through if you could ever avoid it. I pointed out to you that in the 1980 referendum the 60/40 figure was somewhat misleading because almost 50 per cent of French Canadians voted in favour of sovereignty association. The numbers have changed dramatically, I refer to a poll published this morning. I do not know what the results would be, and I want to be very careful and clear about that, nobody can predict the future. But I know this, if Mr. Parizeau gets a chance to have a referendum, that on referendum night, as you and every one of the members of this House of Assembly right here, and all the rest of us, too, that on that night when you are sitting there with your families and children, one thought is going to go through your minds and that thought is, when you are looking at your kids, do you mean to tell me that we could have avoided all of this for Meech Lake? And I can also tell you that that night, if that night were ever to come, the terms of Meech Lake are going to look very, very reasonable indeed to every member of this House of Assembly, and every House of Assembly across Canada.

Now, the Meech Lake Accord is not going to solve anything overnight, but I believe the Meech Lake Accord is going to give Robert Bourassa, who is a federalist - don't believe the cheap shots. Robert Bourassa is a federalist. The Liberal Party of the Province of Quebec is a federalist party, and the Meech Lake Accord is going to give Bourassa the tools to fight any referendum and any election in Quebec on behalf of a united Canada, and I believe win. I would look forward with confidence to participating actively with Premier Bourassa, with the Meech Lake Accord having been signed. On behalf of a united Canada, I would look forward with confidence of entering a referendum in the Province of Quebec, if ever one were brought forward, and I believe on the basis of what we have done, and on the basis of the leadership of Premier Bourassa, and the strength of the commitment of other Quebecers, that federalism would carry the day. That I believe very, very sincerely.

And, so, those are some of the consequences of the failure of the Meech Lake Accord, if this were to go down here tonight or tomorrow. But there are also consequences of success. If Meech Lake Passes in the Newfoundland and Labrador House of Assembly, the first thing is we get to the issues of aboriginal justice, and Senate reform, and fairness for the north. That is the first thing, but the second thing is much more important: We get to keep Canada. Awkward, ungainly, magnificent Canada, we get to keep it and to pass it on to our children in the certain knowledge that they, perhaps, will do a better job than we did, and

improve it in their own way and in their own time, so that it can then be passed on to their children.

Canada: We rank thirty-first in the world in terms of population. We have 26 million people, spread out over 5,500 miles, from the coast of this Province to British Columbia, but we have the second highest standard of living in the world, we are the seventh largest trading nation in the world, ahead of the Soviet Union, which has 285 million people; they are eighth, we are seventh, with 26 million people.

When Mr. Gorbachev visited with me two or three weeks ago, he indicated that the mystery to the Soviet Union was the capacity of a country like Canada, with 26 million people, to throw off such splendid wealth. It is extraordinary! And to understand the extent to which he would be mystified, consider the fact that he is heading a resource-rich country, with almost 300 million people, between 275 million and 300 million people, and Canada trades more than they do, with 26 million. We have the eighth largest economic output in the entire world.

Only Canada, your country and mine, only Canada is a member of the G-7, the Commonwealth, a founding member of the Sommet La Francophonie and the O.A.S. Canada, over the decades, has acquired remarkable reach and influence internationally. It is a country whose citizenship is admired around the world for what you and I and our children have come to build and come to stand for, the principles I chatted about, the principles others have talked about in this House. And

that kind of reach and that kind of influence only comes from a rich, prosperous, growing, successful and united Canada.

First of all, it is needed to deal with the giants of globalization. There is no sanctuary in the next century for those who seek an easy way to deal with 320 million people in Europe, with the tigers of Southeast Asia, it must come from the power and the commitment and the strength of a united country like ours, sitting at the G-7, not the G-77. I like them, too, but I prefer the G-7 for Canada, the G-7 and the Commonwealth and the Francophonie.

And what else does Canada do because of its reputation? I saw something on Monday in the House of Commons. I saw, in the Canadian House of Commons, Nelson Mandela, after twenty-seven years in jail, rise before a lectern like this in the Canadian House of Commons for his first speech ever before a freely elected Parliament, freely elected National Parliament and say that he was free, and that his movement was well on the way in substantial measure because of the contribution and the fight that Canada was able to wage over so many years, beginning with Mr. Diefenbaker in 1961, when Mr. Diefenbaker took the decision and brought about the exclusion of South Africa for its policies, its evil policies of apartheid. Canada did that, not alone, but Canada did it because of its influence and its influence comes directly from its unity. And read the comments of Nelson Mandela about the inspiration that he proposes to take from what Canada has been able to achieve. The process that we have followed, obviously, which we inherited,

needs to be improved. We all, Clyde, I, David, and everybody agrees on that. We can do an enormously better job in the future, but this is one of the improvements that we can make, once Meech Lake is passed, once Quebec is at the table again.

The first victim, parenthetically, I always thought of the exclusion of Quebec or the absence of Quebec, to put it in another way, was when I was called upon to chair the Conference on Aboriginal Rights. Aboriginal peoples securing the Constitutional amendment. Simple justice for the aboriginal people, conferences, foreseen, and provided for, under the 1982 Constitution. And I believe that it was in 1985, when we came this close, this close, to securing an historic Constitutional amendment that would have changed possibly the lives and the history of all of Canada's aboriginal peoples, and we failed because we were short one vote, and the vote was Quebec, that had already signalled its intention to support, had it been back in the Constitutional family.

And so, there you have it. Canada is more, is much more than numbers on a sheet, even though the numbers are pretty impressive and every other country in the world admires what our forefathers and the immigrants to these shores achieved. But Canada is more than numbers on a sheet, Canada is like a family and families correct problems, not by breaking up in anger, but by sitting down together in mutual respect. That is the way in your family and it is the way in mine, and I urge you, simply, to do for Canada what you would do for your own family, by healing the divisions and binding the wounds and growing

together more strongly than ever before.

I thought that the true significance of the Meech Lake Accord was really explained in one sentence by Mr. Bourassa and by one reply by Mr. Parizeau. It was substantially under-reported, but I was struck by its historic significance and I would like to take one second to share it with you now.

When we are together in Ottawa, on a Saturday night, here is a translation of what Mr. Bourassa said, of one line. "For many Quebecers, 1981, when Quebec was excluded from the Canadian Constitution, Canada was only a country in law." From now on with ratification of the Meech Lake Accord, Canada will be a country in fact, a real country, for all Quebecers. And the next day in response to this clear cut statement of love for Canada and commitment to Canada. In La Presse here is a translation of a report of Mr. Parizeau's reaction. Mr. Parizeau rose to denounce the statement made by the Quebec Premier during last Saturday night's official ceremony in Ottawa to the effect that Canada is now "a real country for Quebecers". That genuinely reflects Mr. Bourassa's "profound feelings", he said. Yes, because of what Quebec stands to lose and stands to gain from the Accord, I, Jacques Parizeau, cannot admit that Canada is a real country for Quebecers. We will never accept that, thundered the Quebec leader. Accusing Robert Bourassa of having sold his soul and ours. With that, there is everything you would ever want to know about the importance of the decision that you are called upon to take. Robert Bourassa, leader of the

Liberal party, Premier of Quebec, subjected to bitter attack and derision, and why, because he made a statement to the effect that he loves his country. This gives you an idea of the enormous burden Mr. Bourassa bears in the Province of Quebec, and how much he needs your help, and he needs your understanding, and he needs the understanding of all Canadians at this very, very crucial time. I am not being even critical of Mr. Parizeau, I respect his judgment. He is committed as I say, to the destruction of our country. Mr. Bourassa is committed to keeping it together. He is saying to you, just as surely as summer follows spring, "Help me. Aidez-moi. Aidez-moi les gens de Terre Neuve et du Labrador. Aidez-moi à conserver le Québec au sein de la grande famille Canadienne. C'est ça, le message de Robert Bourassa qui vous adresse. Viewed Meech Lake as a miracle, but I have come to view it as I indicated as a bridge which will allow young French and English speaking Canadians to continue to meet as Canadians, and to know and to understand and appreciate the splendour of Canada. I want young French Canadians to understand the magnificence of Newfoundland and Labrador and I want Labradorians to have the opportunity to see the majesty of British Columbia and to realize it is their country. It is all part of their country. It is theirs as Canadians. And then one day, our children, yours and mine, can themselves in their own time, with their own imperfections and with the own God given talents, make the arrangements that will keep this country as strong and united a Canada for them and for their children. The prophet Joel once said, that young men have visions, and old men

dream dreams. We are entitled to our visions. And Canada is entitled to its great dreams, and part of that great dream is based on the unity of this great nation. The respect that comes from our association, one with the other, the tremendous future that Newfoundland and Labrador has to play in a united Canada. And a tremendous role that a united Canada can play in the world. And much of this depends now on your freely expressed vote and I wish you, as a fellow parliamentarian, I wish you well, and I wish you Godspeed and I thank you for your kindness.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, if you would allow me just another moment or two.

I expect that a Prime Minister has addressed other Provincial Legislatures in the past, but I don't know if on any occasion a Prime Minister has ever addressed a Legislature on an issue before the Legislature, and there is a significant difference than simply extending a courtesy and an addressing the Legislature on an issue that its members are considering.

Perhaps this is the first time in Canadian history that it has been done. It is a very significant event and I want to assure you, Prime Minister, that I am confident that all of the members, whether they agree with the comments you have made or they disagree, or they agree with some and disagree with others, whatever, they respect your views and I have no doubt that all will take your views into consideration

in making the decisions that they have to make, and in the end I am confident that all members of this Legislature will make the decision in the way that they feel is best for Canada.

I have confidence that everyone of them will put first and foremost what is, in their opinion, in the best interest of Canada. I think we have come to think that way, and I have listened for the last two days as each member has explained to all the rest of us how he or she has searched his conscience and heart on this issue and how they have come to the conclusions to which they have come, some who have expressed it and others are still reserving, waiting to hear what you and others have had to say and waiting to hear what other members will have to say.

I say to you, Prime Minister, you have made a significant contribution to this debate and I thank you most sincerely for the great honour that you have done us in agreeing to participate. Thank you again very much.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Simms: Mr. Speaker, I, too, want to join with the Premier in welcoming the Prime Minister and his colleagues. I think it is fair to say that the presentation of the Prime Minister's significantly indicates just how important and how critical and how serious this entire issue is, and by undertaking such an historic visit for a Prime Minister to come to our Provincial Legislature, also emphasizes the importance and the seriousness of the situation.

I believe, too, that by having the

Premiers yesterday, of Ontario and New Brunswick, and today of Saskatchewan, First Ministers of all political stripes. I think its very important for us to realize that this entire debate and this entire issue transcends political lines, partisan lines and I believe, as the Premier said, all members of the Legislature would admit freely that the presentation and the contribution of the Prime Minister today has certainly been thought provoking. I hope it will be helpful to those members who still have not made their decision, but I think it is even more important that the Prime Minister of the country had the opportunity, not only to make a presentation to us in this Legislature, but perhaps, more importantly, to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador as well as to the people of Canada.

This is a very important decision, Prime Minister. It is our decision at the moment here in this Legislature and we thank you for the contribution you made today and hopefully it will help make that decision a little easier. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Since the House was in a state of adjournment, then I will expect that we just recess and reconvene at 8:00 p.m.



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The House resumed at 8:00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: The House will now come to order.

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

Mr. Greening: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Greening: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to speak in this very important debate. The Meech Lake Accord, I believe, is an agreement among each of Canada's provinces and the Federal Government to bring Quebec as a full participant in the Canadian constitutional family. It is Canada saying yes to Quebec, after Quebec saying yes to Canada by voting to pass the Meech Lake Accord. Its purpose is to unite Canada and it works to promote the equality of the provinces within Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the Accord is not a perfect document. But until 1982 no changes could be made to the Canadian Constitution without the consent of Britain. In 1982 we took a joint step toward maturity as a Nation by patriating the Constitution. In 1987 we took the next step by welcoming Quebec to the Constitutional Table by addressing concerns that could not be addressed in 1982, in 1990 completing the step from 1987 by welcoming Quebec to the Table. It is not appropriate to speak of constitutions as perfect. But they are building blocks and each step in the process accomplishes one thing. A constitution like a country develops through a process and not overnight. If we do not take this step we will not be able to take the next step in our constitutional evolution.

Mr. Speaker, the process of getting the Accord was not perfect, in 1982 changing the Constitution required the consent of the representatives of the British people and that was far from perfect from the Canadian people and yet Canada grew for 115 years under that kind of an amending formula. A new process was designed in 1982, the Constitution for making further changes to the Constitution. Meech Lake has been the first test of that new process. If there is one thing Canadians agree on it is that the process needs to be improved. But that does not mean that every thing we have done has been wrong any more than things we did in Canada for our first 115 years were wrong.

Mr. Speaker, our Premier has fiercely criticized the process by which Meech Lake was arrived at, saying a Constitution should never be written by eleven men in a back room. I agree. A more open process of allowing for more public input is what we must aim for. But Premier Wells had well over a year to involve the people of this Province in public hearings either to hear their suggestions or to educate them to the process, and he choose not to do so. So if the process is to be criticized our own Premier cannot stand above that criticism. His process too was flawed.

Mr. Speaker, if our Constitution is held in limbo for more years, where it has been since 1982, our country will suffer. Members of the financial community have contacted me personally and expressed their concerns that this perpetual Constitutional stalemate is keeping this country and this Province from developing at a pace it should be. All around us

countries are developing at a tremendous pace and even a few years out of the economic main stream threatens to leave Canada behind. Even without Quebec separating this constitutional wrangling is doing our economy damage, and Newfoundland feels the ill-effects of economic damage perhaps worse than any other part of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the possibility of Quebec separating is not by a long shot. The countries of Eastern Europe have given us a sobering example of how fast the pace of change can be when the people have made a decision. My District has an economy based on agriculture, fishing, logging, construction, and tourism, each of them seasonal industries, and we therefore depend heavily on some kind of income support system which is presently provided by the unemployment insurance system. If anything does grave damage to this country's economy the effects will be felt in our social programs and the people of my District stand a good chance of feeling this pinch in the pocket. It is not a god given right that our people enjoy one of the highest standards of living in the entire world, but we have worked hard to achieve that standard of living through co-operation over the years. If we suddenly stop co-operating as a Nation, we can expect our standard of living to survive untouched. What is on the line unless the factors are that for continued strong economic growth in this country are UI, Canada pension, family allowance, DVA etc., if we co-operate as we have in the past then we can only preserve and improve and expand our network of social programs.

Mr. Speaker, some of my

constituents express their worry that Meech Lake and the Distinct Society Clause would infringe on the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. A vast majority of constitutional lawyers in the country say those fears are unfounded. The letter attached to the June 9 agreement reached among First Ministers and signed by six of Canada's top constitutional scholars, said that the rights and freedoms guaranteed to Canadians under the Charter are not infringed or denied by application of the Distinct Society Clause. The Accord also makes it plain the English speaking minority in Quebec is a fundamental part of the distinct Quebec society and that the Government must work to make sure that characteristic is affirmed. People outside of Quebec will not even be affected by the application of this clause so where is the harm? As Premier Peterson said, if the Quebec people want it, and they most certainly do, then who are we to deny them of it, when it is plain that everyone will gain and no one will lose? Mr. Speaker, there are people who say the veto given to the provinces under the Meech Lake Accord on some constitutional changes will be bad for the country and for future constitutional reform. The veto only applies to certain constitutional changes.

One of the main things it does apply to which has caused some concern, is Senate reform. The question is, do we have a better chance of Senate reform with Meech Lake or without it? Without Meech Lake, Quebec won't participate in constitutional reform. Without Meech Lake, changes to the Senate will require the agreement of seven provinces comprising 50 per cent of the population, and that

gives Ontario an effective veto on all such changes.

With Meech Lake, Senate reform already begins, because the provinces get a role in Senate appointments that they never had before. With Meech Lake Senate reform is on the agenda for further constitutional discussions, where it never was before, with the June 9th agreement by First Ministers, which survives if the Meech Lake Accord survives, Senate reform is closer than ever.

Mr. Speaker, some opponents to the Accord have said that the Distinct Society Clause gives Quebec new and special powers. The majority of constitutional experts in Canada disagree with that statement, and as the Member for Mount Pearl said, and the Accord says plain and clear in the Distinct Society Clause: 'Nothing in this section derogates from the powers, rights or privileges of Parliament or the Government of Canada or of the Legislature of the Governments of the provinces, including any power, rights or privileges relating to language.'

Mr. Speaker, a lot of Newfoundlanders are bitter with Quebec over the Churchill Falls Agreement signed back in the 1960s. Killing Meech Lake is not a way to avenge that loss because it is our people and our country which will suffer if the country does not emerge from this constitutional impasse. If we continue to build this country not in the spirit of revenge but by building towards a future, then we can look forward with eagerness to the possibility of negotiating a good agreement on developing of the Lower Churchill.

We badly need the jobs that will come from the Lower Churchill Development, offshore development and economic growth, and we can ill afford to put those jobs on the line, if the reason we are doing so, is not sound. Mr. Speaker, Quebecers want to be part of Canada. Quebec is geographically at the centre of the nation, and we divide ourselves by alienating Quebec, and on the positive side we unite ourselves by co-operating with Quebec.

Mr. Speaker, while some of my constituents support Meech Lake, many do not. But my responsibility and my aim is to do what I can for the benefit of my District, my Province and my country, therefore, on Friday, I will be voting according to my conscience and I will be supporting the Meech Lake Accord.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Carter: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I look upon this exercise as a privilege - to be able to come before this House to debate such an important matter. I would prefer that it had not been necessary to do this but, under the circumstances and given the circumstances under which the Meech Lake Accord was conceived, and the time frame in which it was conceived, then of course we have no choice. Given the fact too, of course, that even though it was our wish at first to undertake a referendum to find out from the people of this Province exactly how they felt about the Meech Lake Accord and the fact that the time

was not permitted to do that, then we had to do the next thing possible, and that was to consult with our constituents and then bring it to the House for a free vote.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to dwell at length on the Accord itself. I think pretty well all aspects of it have been covered by previous speakers, some of whom are experts in the matters of Constitutional Law and I will be guided by them in terms of how they think of the document and the flaws they have identified in it, but I think most Canadians, certainly most that I have heard, will agree that the Meech Lake Accord is a flawed document. The process under which it was conceived was flawed and of course, it being conceived in secrecy, then signed by eleven people barred in a room overnight just about, without any consultation with the Canadian people, I think that speaks for itself.

It was an undemocratic and an unfair process when it was born in 1987. It was an unfair and undemocratic process in Ottawa a few weeks ago when the eleven First Ministers were called together for a Sunday evening dinner that lasted about seven days, and then under conditions that were certainly not ideal. Far from ideal.

Some of the Ministers signed the documents. Our Premier undertook to have the matter referred to the House of Assembly and subsequently to a referendum, but as it turned out to a standing vote in this House. But I am not complaining because I believe that we are much more fortunate than people in the other provinces, because other

Canadians living in other provinces did not have that opportunity, but I believe certainly on the basis of what I have been hearing and letters I have received, it is quite obvious that most of them would have liked to have had the opportunity to have this debate in their respective Legislatures and to give their members an opportunity to vote and to represent them in their vote.

Mr. Speaker, like most Canadians I suppose, we watched the events of the seven days in Ottawa when the First Ministers were discussing the Meech Lake Accord, we became aware of the manipulation which was going on and the bullying tactics that were applied by some of the First Ministers, but I think like most Newfoundlanders, and indeed like most Canadians, we have reason and in fact good reason to be very, very proud of the way in which our Premier conducted himself under those very trying circumstances. I think it does the Province proud that our Premier could go to that conference, could keep his cool as long as he did, and earn the respect of his fellow First Ministers and earn the respect of, I suppose, literally millions of Canadians and coming closer to home, I think if Premier Wells, by virtue of the way he conducted himself earned the respect of- I was going to say the vast majority of Newfoundlanders, but I would almost go as far as to say, just about all of them.

I had occasion to visit my District, when the House closed last Wednesday. I arranged to have a telephone poll conducted, in fact we had a comprehensive telephone blitz conducted in the riding. Every single house in the

riding was telephoned. We had ten people who called every single house in the riding, 2,700 altogether. And of the number who expressed an opinion, mind you, they weren't all prepared to say yes or no, some admitted they didn't know enough about it to be able to voice an opinion, but certainly of the large number who did in fact express an opinion, 83 per cent of those who responded, advised me to vote against the Meech Lake Accord. Having received that kind of instruction from my constituents and being a politician who shows some respect for the wishes of the people - I have been elected and re-elected now, ten times, and you don't do that by ignoring your constituents. I think the fact that I have managed to get elected and re-elected, probably more than any other person in this House speaks for itself, and that being the case of course, I have every intention of not tampering with success but following the advice of my constituents and judging myself accordingly when the vote is taken tomorrow.

I have been lucky I suppose in that, again unlike any other Member of this House, I have had the privilege and honour to serve three terms in the House of Commons in Ottawa. And during that period of reform there were a number of free votes taken on the matter of abortion, capital punishment, and one or two others. These are really emotional issues, and it does take a bit of time to make up your mind as to how you want to vote. On the matter of capital punishment for example, your decision could very well mean the life of a human being. And certainly in the case of abortion, I suppose the same thing can be said. But I guess I

am lucky because I polled my constituents and I put the questions to them, and those people who lived in my riding at the time came back and they were almost unanimous that I should not support abortion, and that I should not support capital punishment, and of course that was exactly the way I felt and I did feel pretty lucky about that. I do not know what I would have done, had it been different. And had maybe they suggested I vote for abortion or I vote for capital punishment, because then I would have to make a very very tough decision, because that was a matter of conscience. But in this case I have been lucky again, because my constituents, eighty-four percent of them, obviously are thinking along the same lines that I am. Therefore, it is not going to be a difficult thing for me to do tomorrow.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have heard people in this chamber, and I have every respect for a man who shows a lot of emotion, it is an emotional issue, and I do not look down on people who show a high level of emotion when discussing this matter. But I must confess I am not going through that kind of trauma, or call it what you want. I understand, I think, pretty well what is at stake. I do not profess to know all there is to know, the legal technicalities of the Meech Lake Accord, but I do know I think, enough about it to understand and to have certain strong views on it. So therefore, I do not find it too difficult, I do not find it too difficult to make a decision and to exercise my right tomorrow and to make my position known in this House.

I listened with some interest to the visiting dignitaries, Premier

McKenna, Premier Peterson and today the Prime Minister and Premier Devine, and I listened with some interest to Premier McKenna's speech. I do not want to be unkind to a guest in our House, he was an invited guest, so I shall refrain from saying anything that might be offensive. Premier McKenna did say a few things that I have to make reference to. He talked about Canada being a great country, a great democratic country. He went to great lengths to point out some of the advantages that we as Canadians enjoy. But yet, he took a complete turn, he became very inconsistent in that having spent sometime talking about this great democratic country that we have, he then launched out into a fearmongering exercise, in which he started to instill fear in the hearts of Members, especially those who might vote against the Meech Lake Accord, as to what would happen, quite possibly, if the Accord was rejected. I can not quote him now verbatim, but he did come forward with a list of things that might happen. I believe he talked about the high interest rates and the dollar would be affected, exports, unemployment and a whole wide range of things. So I thought to myself that for a country that is so democratic, and Canada is a democratic country, surely he cannot mean that the price that we will pay for exercising our rights under that democracy, that we will pay a price by having certain reprisals against us for doing what we have a democratic right to do.

I again listened tentatively to the Prime Minister this afternoon, and again I do not want to be unkind to the Prime Minister, I do not want to say anything that will

besmirch the Prime Minister's office, but I gather the same kind of veiled threat in the Prime Minister's speech as well. A veiled threat that if things do not go right, if the Meech Lake is rejected, Lord only knows what can happen. Now, Mr. Speaker, I do not buy that, and I am not at all intimidated by that kind of fearmongering because in the past few weeks we have been subjected to all kinds of fearmongering and threats, veiled threats, of what can happen.

I did not hear the program, but, my son or my daughter or somebody told me that they heard our Federal representative in the Cabinet, Mr. Crosbie, on the telephone open line show this morning, and I understand that he received a lot of calls, most of which were not what you would call complimentary or supportive. But I did hear that Mr. Crosbie talked about the possible aftermath of a Meech Lake rejection, and talked about Hybernia and how it might very well delay the Hybernia project. He said it might very well result in higher interest rates, and it might very well affect the Canadian dollar, and it might affect our exports. Now again, I view that as a threat, as fearmongering, done for no other reason than to try and influence the people who in this House tomorrow will be making a very important decision.

Mr. McKenna in his speech, in a very emotional way, was talking about the need to get Meech Lake behind us, and said he would give anything to see Canadians smile again. Well I can tell him now, Mr. Speaker, that if you visit most of the fishing communities in this Province that I have gone to in recent weeks and days, there

are not many Canadians smiling. They have very little reason to smile. Very little reason to smile because the condition of the fishery in this Province at this point in time, is such that the very livelihood of our fishermen has been jeopardized, in fact to such an extent that a lot of our fishermen are about to give up hope. He talked about loss of pride and loss of potential and loss of development potential because of this.

He talked about Canada being a great country, as it is, we all know that, he said immigrants were lined up waiting to get in here. Well I can only remind the hon. gentlemen that immigrants who come do not stay in the Maritimes very long. They know where they are best off, and they head straight for Central Canada. So that too I guess speaks for itself. That the economy of Eastern Canada and the economy of Newfoundland especially, are hardly attractive enough to attract these immigrants to keep them here. He talked about the high esteem in which Canada is held, by other countries, and no doubt we are. But yet in the same breath, he talks about how other countries will lose confidence in our financial institutions and maybe take some action that might have the effect of raising interest rates or affecting the Canadian dollar. These are scare tactics, Mr. Speaker, and I for one am not at all amused by them, and they are not going to have any influence at all on me.

Mr. Speaker, I am a great supporter of Canada. I am a Canadian, I am proud to be a Canadian. I was born a Newfoundlander like a lot of other people in my age group, we became

Canadians by choice, and for that I have no regret. But I can say this, and I can say it with all sincerity, that in my view in the great many provinces in this country, in a great many cases, that Confederation is not working, in fact, it is not working very well. We still have the highest unemployment rate in Canada, in this Province; we still have the lowest per capita income in the Province; we have the dubious distinction of having the most of all that is bad and the least of all that is good, and that is not a very good mix, and it does not say very much for just how effective Confederation has been for this Province.

I believe that the Meech Lake as it is now structured will have the effect of preventing us from getting something that could, to a large extent, correct a lot of the problems that we have. And I am referring, of course, to an elected Senate, a Triple E Senate. And my hon. friend across smiles. I would like for him to tell me how we can hope to get equality in this country under the present circumstances, where the institutions or parliament, for example, is so heavily loaded in favour of the big provinces, that a small province like Newfoundland and Nova Scotia and PEI does not stand a chance. And I remind him again that I spent three terms in the House of Commons and I can speak with a little bit of authority as to how and what happens in that institution. And exactly how little power and clout that a member from a small province has got it.

I recall when I served in the Commons, if you mentioned the word 'fish' some of the smart alecks across the way from Central

Canada, would hold their nose and make all kinds of weird sounds meant to deride and to demean what you were saying. Or if you talked about seals you would find a few jokers would say things that were not meant to be complimentary. They showed very little respect for the problems of Atlantic Canada, and they showed very little respect for those of us who came from Atlantic Canada who tried to find solutions to some of these problems. I am firmly convinced that until and unless we get an elected Senate, where Newfoundland will have equal representation, that we will never get equality in this country. And if we do not get political equality then you can be sure we are not going to get social and economic equality. And I can understand now why the Premiers of the larger provinces would fight tooth and nail to prevent this from happening, and we have already seen evidence of it.

Mr. Speaker, as I said a moment ago, there are people here who are taking this debate very, very seriously, as they should, and it is an emotional debate. But I would remind my colleagues that they should save their weeping and their tears not for the multinational conglomerates, the big giant corporations in Central Canada who are lobbying all of us now to encourage us to support the Accord, but I would save my tears for the fishermen that I saw on the wharf in Herring Neck last week, a young married man, nothing to do only go fishing, no formal training, last year he told me he had a half a year's income earned, until Monday this year he had landed two fish. And he was asking me what he can do? He said, I do not have a job; I have no education; I have no money; I

cannot leave the community and I cannot get any fish. What can I do? My unemployment insurance ran out on the 15 May. What can I do? I would save my tears for the unemployed in this Province, where we have the most of any other part of Canada, for the underprivileged for the people who are disadvantaged, and we have many of them, and not only in Newfoundland, but other provinces. I am thinking about the Native peoples in the north. So there are a number of things, Mr. Speaker, that we can be weeping about, that in my view would be much more appropriate than what we are doing.

I said at the outset that I will be voting tomorrow, and I look forward to it. I am actually looking forward to the opportunity of being able to do something that I believe will bring about some badly needed improvements in this Province and in this country. I sincerely believe that by rejecting the Meech Lake Accord we will accomplish a lot more in the long term than if we approve it. And that is why I will look forward to rejecting that Accord tomorrow morning, because I believe I have to. I have to do it because I do not want to see some of the things that we are now suffering here in this Province, unemployment, low per capita income, low growth, I do not want us to do anything that will serve to perpetuate that situation, and I believe the only way of resolving it is to reject the Meech Lake, and hopefully at some time in the future, we will have an elected Senate, and therein I believe will lie, certainly a major solution to our economic and social problems.

So Mr. Speaker, again I want to

thank the Premier for this opportunity to say these few words. I want to thank my constituents who came through with such an overwhelming support of the position that I am now able to take. I have a lot of admiration for people in the Twillingate and Notre Dame Bay area, and I can tell you now that anybody who thinks that these people do not know what they are talking about or do not fully understand the implications of the Meech Lake Accord, I think you are only kidding yourself, because while they might not be up on all of the legal technicalities or the legal jargon, I can tell you they have a pretty good comprehension of what the Accord is all about, and the fact that so many of them, in fact, in my District 93 per cent of those who expressed an opinion would want me to vote against it, I think that too speaks for itself. So, Mr. Speaker, I intend tomorrow to vote against the Meech Lake Accord. I do not think it is going to have any of the dire consequences that we are being told it is going to have, I would like to think that I have too much faith in my fellow Canadians to think that they would punish this little Province for exercising its God given democratic right. But be that as it may, I have to do what I have to do, and tomorrow morning or tomorrow afternoon I will be voting against the Meech Lake Accord.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Fortune - Hermitage.

Mr. Langdon: Mr. Speaker, I count it a privilege and an honour to be able to speak on this resolution that is now before the Legislature. There is no doubt in

my mind that it is the most important debate that has taken place in this Province since we became a part of the Dominion in 1949.

Mr. Speaker, on January 25th of this year, I made a personal political decision that many people thought was trite and unimportant at the time. And I must admit some people did say to me; Meech Lake, come on be serious, why would you take such a decision over something as trivial as Meech Lake. But today, Mr. Speaker, these same people are pondering and undergoing soul-searching to say no to the Meech Lake Accord. Not no to Quebec, not no to Canada. There is no one prouder in this country than I am to be a Canadian.

Being a bit of a sports fanatic, I well remember in 1972 when Canada played the first series against the Soviet Union. And sitting in a school, when we were trailing 5 to 4 in the seventh game, and Yvan Cournoyer tied it and then Paul Henderson scored the winning goal. And at the end of that particular hockey game 3,000 Canadians stood in the ice hockey hall in the Soviet Union and sang 'O Canada'. And I think that any of us who were there, or experienced that, realized what it meant to be Canadian. And that was no lesser than the last Canada cup we had when the great Canadian and a great Quebec person, Mario Lemieux scored the winning goal, to again give Canada a series. And we all felt what it was to be a Canadian. That love for my country is even stronger today than ever before. And I love Canada. And so I remember last weekend when the Premier came back from the Constitutional Conference, and at the airport I

saw him on the stage with tears flowing from his eyes, because I am sure he was torn with his love for Canada.

And I think that for us here in the Legislature, Mr. Speaker, to say that we are not proud to be a Canadian or something we are going to do is going to hurt Canada. I think that is wrong.

Mr. Speaker, we have to come to grips in this resolution with what is Canada. What is Canada? And what is best for Canada? And that is the essence of the Meech Lake Accord. It is not, if you love Canada, or do not love Canada, or love Quebec, or do not love Quebec. The Minister of Justice, hon. Mr. Peterson, hon. Mr. McKenna, the Prime Minister and others have stood in this Legislature, as well as other people, and have indicated their love for their country.

But Mr. Speaker, what we have in the Meech Lake Accord is two visions of Canada. Those of us in English Canada see Canada as ten Provinces with a strong central Government. But that is not the view in Quebec. Quebec sees Canada as two nations, an English and a French. Two dramatically and diametrically opposed views as to what Canada is. I contend, Mr. Speaker, that Meech Lake has not found a solution to these divergent views. And that is, I believe, where the people have stood in this Assembly, those who have said that the Meech Lake Accord is flawed. And I believe that is where the flaw is. Because what it does, is give one of the members of this country special rights and privileges that the rest of us do not have. And that cannot be, if we are going to live in a country where we are all

going to be members and partakers of it as equals.

Mr. Speaker, what about the other mosaics in this country. The aboriginals and the multicultural groups. And one should not be surprised when Premier Bourassa - and I was driving in over the highway that night, coming in from a function in the District, and I heard all the speeches on radio early in the morning, and one of the things that really struck me was when Bourassa said about the Accord; we have made tremendous gains for the Province of Quebec. And that really in essence, I think, says it. Made tremendous gains. Sure we have to have Quebec as a part of the constitutional framework in this country, and it is very important, and I do not think anybody is arguing against that. But this Accord, I believe, gives the Province gains in their further recognition of the French national concept in Canada. And I believe the Prime Minister echoed these same words here today. He said that Quebec wanted to be a part of the constitution, a part of Canada, but be able to do their own thing within that constitution. And I believe in that sense, if that is what the Accord does, then it is flawed.

If one was to follow what happened at the First Minister's Conference, we would find eight and probably nine Premiers and the Prime Minister looking at Canada as a necessity; that of accommodation, accommodating Quebec with its demands regardless of the cost, while the Premier of this Province suggested it be done on principle. Look at what is best for Canada and what is right for Canada as a nation. There is no doubt there is a large number

of Canadians who agree with the Premiers and the Prime Ministers. But I believe that if Canadians were given a chance to exercise their right, that the majority of them would agree with the Premier of this Province. And that is why I believe that there is a ground swell of support against the Accord in the country. Because, so much you see, is being taken away from so many by so few under the guise of democracy.

The Premier in his address at the First Minister's Meeting said, and I quote, 'I do not share their convictions but I am only one opinion, and when I see all of this talent and conviction arrayed around me, I have grave doubts that my convictions are correct - I cannot but have grave doubts'. I think this is what we have heard from Peterson and Devine, from McKenna and Mulroney today. We want to have Quebec a part of Canada. For anyone to say anything less than that, I think, would be unfair. But also, on the other end of the coin, I believe it is unfair to all Canadians to accept Quebec with its demands into the Canadian Mosaic, having privileges which we as other Provinces do not have.

Mr. Speaker, Canadians from all walks of life, from Vancouver Island to Cape Bonavista, have been drawn into this national debate. I believe we have started a new awareness in our constitutional evolution. I am sure that if we had said to Canadians and Newfoundlanders, before the first ministers met in Ottawa, the constitution would have meant very little. But that is no longer the case, we have become aware of what it means for us. And I would suggest to you that this is the same basic

principle that we see arising in eastern Europe where the people had been under the yoke of communism for so long that the moral fabric of their society was destroyed, because the ordinary individual did not have a chance to have an input into the countries constitution. And today we see where the problem in these particular countries have come from the ordinary individuals, that have come from the ground up, from the common people. And I believe, Mr. Speaker, that that is what has happened here, because Canadians have become so cynical of the process and everybody has talked about that earlier. Let me quote to you from an editorial from the Ottawa Sun, which I think bears this out. It says, 'Time for tears, not cheers. Canadians should be mad as hell.

They have been used, abused and confused by the gang of eleven. It ducked behind closed doors to manipulate the country's future then emerged to play t.v. celebrities.' That is the cynicism that is there, and I think this is what has happened. And Canadians want a right to have a say in their Constitutions, their Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the way that we will live. And I believe, as does the majority of Canadians, that the process we have seen over the last few days has been denied them.

The question I think that we have to consider: would the Meech Lake Accord at this time impinge upon the democratic rights of all Canadians to build a society that people themselves have a right to have input in. I contend that Canada is bigger than any one person and it is bigger than any one political party, and it is bigger than any one province. It is a combination. Canada has to

be a country where all of us share, and share alike in its resources.

There is no doubt that the national elements in Quebec is coming forth with renewed vigor to separate. If the greatest nation on earth were to stop for a moment and reflect, we can see what is happening. The Quebec society has changed. What we see today is different leadership, leadership that is coming from the business elite in the province, the professionals, and along with the media, the media that has a strong national feeling and in my opinion is whooping up the sentiments in Quebec.

Last Saturday on my way to the community of Gaultis I saw this 18 wheeler parked on the wharf. And when I was getting out this guy got out and I said you are all the way here from P.E.I. He said no, I am from Quebec. Then I began to perk up, and I said are you an anglophone or a francophone? He said, I am a francophone. I told him who I was and then I asked him the question, what do the people of Quebec think of the Meech Lake Accord? This is only one sample out of 7 million, but he said I think I can speak for the majority of Quebecers that the Meech Lake Accord for them, is not a major concern. It is the politicians and the media who have blown this thing out of all proportions. And he said I want to remind you that on the 24th of June I will still be driving this 18 wheeler.

Well there is no doubt about it, the editorial in the Trois-Rivières newspaper said this, 'The future is in no way settled and Mr. Bourassa is fooling himself if he thinks, as he said in his speech, that we can now turn to economic

questions. Debate over Senate reform worries many. It will continue with the discussions on the Canada clause, which many fear neutralizes the Distinct Society Clause and there are even fears about the accompanying legal opinion on this charter and the distinct society.' Whenever we see Meech Lake, I believe the populace of Canada looks to it that we, as Canadians, have to be on guard and stop and think and ask ourselves what it is that the media is actually saying. I was surprised when the Member for Mount Pearl stood, I think it was yesterday, and said when three of the news people came to his office and he asked them about the Meech Lake Accord, the three of them had not read it. I wonder how representative is that of the people that are really doing the reporting to the people in this country, and I wonder what kind of a slant does it give. And I am sure the general populace in Quebec is being given a daily diet of anglophone rejection. I believe it said that the Prime Minister of this country has not shown the leadership expected of Canada's First Minister. And I believe as Walt Whitman did in the poem, The Whistle, I think he has paid too much for his whistle and so do a lot of Canadians.

Premier Peterson said yesterday in the House, and it has been quoted, that if you are only concerned for the Meech Lake Accord and voting against it out of fair, then do not vote for it. And I believe that we have heard a diatribe from three different people who have impressed upon us the consequences of not approving the Meech Lake Accord.

What is the Meech Lake Accord asking Canadians to address in

Quebec's five original proposals? What it is asking us is to fundamentally change the character of Canada as a Federal state, and it will eventually give Quebec the total resolve to ensure, regardless of the proportionate size of the Canadian population, to have control of their future. If Quebec is given the right to control immigration then the immigrants that come to that province will not be given a choice of language and culture, and I believe that their allegiance will be to Quebec and not to Canada. Surely goodness this is not what Canada is all about, and it will, in my opinion, unique rights to Quebec which will undermine Canada's equality, and it will endorse the two nation concept of Canada and give Quebec political autonomy.

At the beginning I said that I made a personal political decision somewhat earlier this year, but this has gone beyond a political personal decision. It is to the point of making a fundamental choice on the character of Canada. And in that respect, Mr. Speaker, the question is then, what if I along with other members of this Legislature vote for or against the Meech Lake Accord? If I vote yes I will, and make no mistake about it, make Canada a legal entity by having Quebec a part of the constitutional framework of Canada, but it will forever change the nature of Canada. I will have to be a signatory to embrace Canada as a two nation concept, verses the ten provinces and a strong central Government. If I vote no, I have to weigh what will be the political, economic and social ramifications for Canada and Newfoundland?

I remain firm, Mr. Speaker, in the resolve that Canada, with a diversity of culture, race, religion and colour must adhere to the fundamental principal of equality for everyone and must not be compromised. I remind the Prime Minister that the aboriginal peoples of Canada who were here thousands of years before either the French or the English set foot here, were not signatories to the repatriation of the constitution either. And they, through Elighah Harper in the Manitoba Legislature, have said they too see the Meech Lake Accord as a flawed document. That, Mr. Speaker, is what I believe, and what the people in Fortune - Hermitage have told me through the consultative process that I undertook last week. I guess I have one of the most difficult Districts in this Province to attend to. And in fact, over the last six days I drove just about 2000 kilometers and visited 19 communities. I talked with the clergy, the business people, the community leaders, and there were mixed re-actions. There were some people, very few, one or two, who said to me that the Accord should not have been rescinded in the House of Assembly earlier.

There were a number of people who said that if you did not pass the Meech Lake Accord they were worry about what the economic implications would be in the social programs, but I must say, Mr. Speaker, a large majority of the people with whom I spoke, and it was a large number, plus over the 1,000 who were polled, gave an overwhelming support for the rejection of the Meech Lake Accord, and I did not influence them one way or the other. I didn't want to. I didn't intend to. But what I found, is, as the

Minister for Employment and Labour said, that you have people who said, I know very little about the Accord and then they would give you as much as you were looking for and more.

I think if there is one thing that came through more than others, in speaking, was the fact of equality. Make no bones about it, I have in my District, one of the lowest economic per capita incomes in this Province. The fishery has been devastated, but I believe that when these people voted they were not anti-Quebec and I didn't detect very much of that feeling, but what I found in the survey that was done for me, when the results were compiled and completed, is, that a large number of the people said, we will leave the final choice to you, and that is what I intend to do, Mr. Speaker, along with the big majority of those who asked to vote for the Meech Lake Accord and I will, on tomorrow, when the vote is called, I will vote against the Meech Lake Accord on behalf of the people of Fortune - Hermitage.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Menihek.

Mr. A. Snow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand here today, representing the people of Menihek, the people who have elected me to exercise and speak on the motion that I'll be voting tomorrow, and I will have to exercise my judgement in what I believe to be in their best interest.

I stand here today not in my capacity as a Progressive Conservative Member, though, that's what I am, and I am proud of it, but rather in my capacity as one individual amongst

fifty-two other individuals who will be making the same decision or a similar type of decision that I have to go through. We are charged with that right and considerable responsibility of making that decision on behalf of the people whom we represent in our districts, and I guess indeed whom we represent in this whole Province and the effects of which, after we make our decision, are undoubtedly going to be felt in this whole country. I also stand as a Labradorian, yet as a fiercely proud Canadian, and I am humbled by the magnitude of this decision that each one of us have to make and that I have to make. I want to thank my leader and our Premier, Mr. Wells, with their decisions on allowing a free vote, which allows each of us to make a vote without the rigours of party discipline.

Last night, I listened to one of the most emotional speeches that I have heard in this House of Assembly, given by the Minister of Social Services, when he talked about the people with whom he spoke when he went back to his District last Wednesday and I believe he told the story of where he was last Monday I think, sitting on the gump of a wharf out in his district talking to an older gentleman. He told the story very well, of how the older gentleman spoke of times, hard times, many, many years ago prior to Confederation, and if that gentleman represents yesterday, what was, and we, sitting here in this House of Assembly today, represent the people of today, then indeed the people of tomorrow are the youth, our children.

There are thousands and thousands of children across Canada and across this Province this evening

who do not know, perhaps cannot fully understand what we are doing these latter days of June, 1990.

They are talking about going on a summer vacation, the end of a school year. They hear us and see us and perhaps cannot understand that what we are holding in our hands today is their future. But what they do not and perhaps cannot understand today, they will most definitely live with tomorrow. My wife and I have two children, and I thought a lot in the last ten or twelve days about the decision that I have to make and how it is going to affect my children and your children and everybody's children in this Province. My children had the privilege of growing up on the Labrador/Quebec border, in the towns that today I represent in the House of Assembly. They, like the thousands of people in Western Labrador, have had the opportunity and the privilege of sharing their lives with the people whose experience is very, very different from the experiences of english-speaking Canadians living in a predominantly english-speaking province.

Perhaps next to Port au Port, another provincial electoral district here in this Province, very few other Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have the opportunity that the people of Western Labrador have had, and that is, with the experience of living in two worlds. That we have learned the reality of the phrase, 'Unity through diversity.' We have, in Labrador City and Wabush, probably more new Canadians, first generation Canadians, Canadians from other countries, more of those living in our district, in my district in those two towns, than any other electoral district

in this Province.

We have the second highest number of francophones living in our district. We were the first part of this Province to have French education in our schools, and yet, also in Western Labrador, we have the privilege of having the Labrador Heritage Society, a group of people who promote and preserve the heritage, the culture and the history of the people of Labrador, and just across the border from Western Labrador in Quebec, is the town of Fermont, a new town created in the mid-seventies, and the people of Fermont, are, even as I speak here tonight, I am sure preparing, gearing up a celebration for their St. Jean Baptiste Day, the 24th of June.

It was eighty-two years ago that Pope Pius The Tenth declared Jean Baptiste or John the Baptist, the patron saint of the Province of Quebec, drawing a link between the French Canadian people who embarked on a new world hundreds of years ago, and a man who 2,000 years ago went into the wilderness to prepare for the coming of Christ. And for centuries in Quebec, St. Jean Baptiste has been a strong reminder and a symbol of the proud culture and the tradition that the French people have and have preserved that here in North America.

This 24th of June they will be celebrating throughout Quebec and Fermont while we, the people, the residents of St. John's will be celebrating what is commonly referred to as Discovery Day here in St. John's. They will be celebrating Jean Baptiste Day, the 24th. of June, and it is a major celebration in Quebec. And I am hoping that is going to be a celebration showing, yes, a

nationalistic spirit possibly in Quebec, but a federalist spirit too. They too want to be part of this Canada. And I want for them to show the rest of this country that they are glad, they are happy to be part of this country.

And the message that I have heard from friends of mine who live in Fermont and the message that we have heard from the people of Quebec time and time again, is that they want to keep their unique identity alive. Yes, alive and within Canada. And I have to ask myself is that too much to ask? It certainly is not. Forty-one years ago Newfoundland and Labrador entered Confederation as Canada's tenth, but no doubt not its last Province. But forty-one years ago Labrador City and Wabush did not even exist. But deep within the rock of Labrador trough lay our communities reason for being, in the form of rich iron ore deposits. And within two decades of Confederation Western Labrador is a booming area, possibly considered one of the wealthiest of this Province as an area, as an electoral district it undoubtedly is. And from out of the northern wilderness rose the towns of Labrador City and Wabush in this Province, in the Province of Quebec we saw the birth of a town Shefferville and Gagnon and in later years Fermont.

Perhaps it is because our communities are so young that we are able to sense the vitality of our own existence as communities. We have seen the closing of a mine in Shefferville with 80 per cent of the population moving out of town; we have seen the closing of the mine in Gagnon two hundred kilometers east of us, and we have seen the town bulldozed. And the

people of Fermont and Labrador West, though we are primarily of two different languages and cultures, have developed intimate commercial and social ties with one another. We share our hospitals, we share educational facilities, our recreational facilities, and we have become partners in commerce, and we are not only neighbours, but we have become friends. And though we share a common border, we also share a common bond, we are northerners and we are Canadians. And from the part of Canada, we are Labradorians and Newfoundlanders - mine the iron ore, to the part of Canada we are Quebecers in Sept Isles and Pointe Noir - ship that ore, around the world we are one people, united in our differences, striving in pursuit of a common goal and that is providing for a better future. Now that is the Canada I am helping to build for our children, and that is the Canada I will be deciding with my vote to preserve.

I do not take this decision lightly, and I am sure there is not one member sitting in this House that would take this decision lightly. And I was anxious to discuss the details and the implications of the Meech Lake Accord with my constituents in Menihek, and of the phone calls that I received - some of you talked about the hundreds that you received - well I received fifty at my office and at my home. And I would suggest about 90 per cent were against the Meech Lake Accord, and they gave varying reasons why they were against it, and I am sure they are not much different from the people from the reasons that were given each of you, that they were concerned about the Distinct Society Clause, the powers of the Quebec

Government or too much power to the provinces and not enough central power, that Quebec is getting too much; too much power for Quebec; that they may separate anyway, so why give in to them now. Those were the reasons and I am sure you have heard similar types of reasons. But when 90 per cent were against after only ten or fifteen calls I was terrified, I said, My God, I could not believe it, it was this high. Then I went door to door. I listened to an Open Line poll that they had conducted by CBC. I saw things did change a little.

In the radio poll that was done in my District they found there were eleven for and nine against. In my door to door, of the people who I found at home, I found that I had ten for and fourteen against, and six or eight of them said they elected me and they were not to sure themselves of the Accord and all its implications, they elected me, and suggested that I should exercise my responsibility and vote as I thought. They were not that up on it, so to speak. And I heard other people suggest that they have had similar responses to them when they went door to door or on the telephone, in their particular districts.

But then I also went to the shopping centres, to the ball fields, the same as we all did I guess, wherever we could meet people, and I found that I had 150 people who were for and about 90 against, and about 25 or 30 suggested that they did not know, or were not that much aware of all the implications of what was in Meech Lake, and that I should make a decision that I had to live with and they would have to live with and they would make a decision if I were right, when the time would

come in the next election.

Now I recognize that there is a big difference in the numbers of people phoning and the people I have consulted with in this process, and maybe as the hon. the Member for Kilbride suggested, I too have a kind electorate and they did not want to offend me because they felt that I was in favour of the Accord, they did not want to hurt my feelings, or maybe as one poster suggested, it is the Newfoundland lie factor that a certain percentage of the people being polled in Newfoundland, because of our size probably, our heritage, yes, our culture too, that people do not want to tell us to our face of how they are leaning on a certain issue.

But of the issues that people were against in the Accord, I found that the most common one was that the people were afraid of the implications of the distinct society. And yet many of the people in Labrador West understand, probably more so than anyone else in this Province, about the distinct society in Quebec, because they only live next door. Quebec is not some entity somewhere off in the distance, it is our neighbours. It is our families and friends who speak another language, but who nevertheless dream the same dreams and share the same Canada as we do.

I do not believe that there is anywhere else in this Province that the Quebec feeling and nature is understood as much as in Labrador West, except maybe my hon. friend's District in Eagle River. He too has about a half of the population of his District bordering on the Province of Quebec. And I am sure he will tell you about the feelings that

these neighbours have developed and the friendships that these neighbours in two Provinces have developed. And you have to understand where we live in Labrador. We sit on the border with our sister Province. We ship our ore through the Province before it can be sent to its market. We share the resources with the people of that Province. We live as close neighbours. And whereas interprovincial cooperation has facilitated our growth in the past 25 years, a separate Quebec could spell disaster for our communities. And I say could. And equally a divided and strife-ridden country would spell disaster for the iron ore markets and for the local economy. A Canada divided would be unable to maintain its present economic status. Our people understand the implications of a downturn in a global and national economy. They remember all too well the 1981 and 1982 recession when we had probably 1500 miners lose their jobs. They understand what political uncertainty can mean for practical realities like employment. And our neighbours in Quebec went through the same recession that we had to endure. And yes, they lived and they survived. And they also survived a tenure of political uncertainty with a Separatist Government. And I believe that because of this they have urged their elected representatives to find a solution and put a lid on this kind of conflict; and a majority of them believe that Meech Lake is that lid. They believe that Meech is a solution to that uncertainty in Quebec.

Premier McKenna, when he spoke to us yesterday, talked about how three times the Quebecers have chose Canada. The people of

Fermont and the people of Quebec chose Canada in a 1980 referendum the first time. The second time they chose Canada was in 1985 when they elected Robert Bourassa with a mandate to resolve the constitutional impasse of 1982, when Quebec was not part of the constitutional family of this country. And perhaps, most importantly, they chose Canada in 1987 when the National Assembly voted in favour of the Meech Lake Accord.

The Accord addressed five basic concerns which the people of Quebec believed would help preserve their unique identity in Canada. Firstly, it addressed the question of Quebec's identity in Canada as the only Province whose vast majority of the inhabitants lived in the French language and culture. The Accord said; yes Quebec, Canadians recognize you are a distinct society. Secondly, it addressed Quebec's desire for a greater role in immigration. Thirdly, it addressed the fact that although three of the nine Supreme Court judges traditionally represented Quebec's unique system of law in our country, Quebec had no say in their appointment, and Meech Lake gave Quebec that say, not in fact the final say, but a say nonetheless. Fourthly, it addressed Quebec's and all the other Province's desire to have a say in how some Federal money is spent in that Province in areas of exclusive Provincial jurisdiction. Fifthly, it addressed Quebec's and all the other Provinces's desire that some constitutional changes in some areas could be made only if that Province is party to those changes. I believe those changes are fair. They are a reasonable means of welcoming Quebec as a full participant into the Canadian

family. And that is why they received the approval of the representatives of all ten Provinces and the Federal Government in 1987.

Our own Premier has said in this House, that Quebec's concerns are legitimate and must be properly addressed. And he has further said that the five conditions that I have just outlined, clearly reflect those concerns. Most of the constitutional experts in this country have indicated their firm belief that the way these five concerns were addressed in the Meech Lake Accord, are reasonable, fair, balanced and just. They have not echoed the fears, by the initial callers to my office, that Meech Lake gives new and dangerous powers to the Province of Quebec. In fact the constitutional experts have stated just the opposite. The changes to the constitution under Meech Lake are not wedges into the foundation of our nation, but are building blocks for our country. And yet these changes will be academic unless we, in our wisdom, chose to affirm their inclusion in the Canadian Constitution. It is within our power to say yes, and it is in within our power to say no. Each one of us will have to make that particular decision. And we have to make that decision, I believe, with a strong consideration of the future implications of that decision.

My two children may not be among the constitutional experts of Canada and neither of them have a degree in political science or law, and neither of them profess to understand the entire history of this nation we call Canada. But in our hometowns of Labrador City and Wabush, something has occurred to dispute with the

people who would argue that this nation, Canada, is unworkable. Something has occurred which is more important to me than the arguments of the most learned lawyers, and the most prolific political scientists of the country. From their English speaking home in an English speaking community in an English speaking Province, both my children have formed bonds of friendship and crossed the borders that are said to separate us. And they have both become what I am not, but wish I were, bilingual. They have proven beyond all the academic arguments in the world, that Canada as a nation works. Canada as a nation survives and grows. And Canada as my nation is worth doing everything in my power to fight to preserve. And I plead with every member in this House to put our nation first in their decision to vote, and keep that nation alive, alive and well for our children, our children's children, and their children after that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

Dr. Kitchen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As all hon. members know, this House is situated in St. John's centre, a District which stretches just north of this Confederation Building and goes right to the waterfront. A District which consists of some of the nicest people in the world, and some of the most intelligent, because after all, they voted Liberal.

It has been a privilege to represent this District, Mr. Speaker, and my vote will represent the advice given to me

by my constituents, and the few remarks that I will make, and will express as best I can, reflect the major points they have made to me concerning the Meech Lake Accord and the accompanying document.

I have listened with great interest to the guest speakers we have had here, to the three Premiers, and today, to the highlight, the Prime Minister of Canada, and felt deeply honoured that they would come to this House to address us on this very important occasion. But, Mr. Speaker, while listening, there is nothing they said made more sense than what my constituents told me, and so, I will be voting as my constituents advised me.

Mr. Speaker, I, with the help of some friends, have systematically contacted by phone, and discussed the Meech Lake Accord, with over 2,700 constituents in St. John's centre. We have been at it for ten days. I personally have conducted private, one on one conversations with close to 500 constituents. About 300 phoned in to the office at first, and that was the total number, and the vote was running about 90 per cent against Meech Lake. Perhaps this represents a group of people who are very excited about this issue, and may not really express the views that are throughout the constituency, and so we systematically polled. We polled according to the voters lists which we had from the last election and where we had phone numbers written down, we updated it and so on.

Even though, and I am very sorry that we didn't get to every constituent, it was my objective to get to every constituent, but we didn't do it, we couldn't make

it. But we got to 2,700, some are in favour of Meech Lake, there is no doubt about it, there are substantial numbers who are in favour of Meech Lake, and the reasons they give, they wish to put the dispute behind us. Let's get it over with and get on with something else. They fear, some fear, the possible negative effects on business of continued uncertainty, and some are worried about the break up of Canada, or the scapegoating of Newfoundland if the Accord should fail.

However, not one person in the 2,700 displayed any enthusiasm for Meech Lake. Not one of 2,700. The vast majority, more than 70 per cent, are solidly opposed and have requested and advised me to vote against it. Mr. Speaker, I also conducted a poll in the neighbouring District of St. John's East. The District I shadow for the Liberal Party, and there again, the vote is overwhelmingly Meech. From long and involved discussions I have had with many constituents, I can assure all hon. members that opinions are for the most part, carefully and painstakingly thought out.

Mr. Speaker, there is a perception that the Quebec Government is somewhat inflexible, but, Mr. Speaker, Quebecers, as individuals, are highly regarded by the people in St. John's Centre. During the past decade or so, the people of this city and this Province have made significant moves towards bilingualism, in an effort to cement this country together. For example, many of our children, including my own daughter, are becoming bilingual. They are being taught from kindergarten in French, by Quebecers and by

francophone Newfoundlanders in the French immersion programs offered by so many of our schools.

Mr. Speaker, Quebecers and Newfoundlanders share the distinction of having cultures remarkably distinct and different from the increasing homogeneous North American society. There have always been strong personal relationships between Newfoundlanders and Quebecers, who are of course, as the Member for Menihek said, are our closest neighbours. Moreover, Newfoundlanders are surrounded by water just as Quebec is surrounded by a sea of English-Canadians, and in that we are very distinct. We are inward-looking societies to some extent. We have a very great sense, we know who we are, both of these societies, we know who we are. We have a strong sense of identity and we can understand each other.

Mr. Speaker, I lived five years in Montreal some years ago, when I was a young man, and there I went to university. I worked on St. James Street, and I spent a year in and out of hospitals and convalescent homes, and there I got to know a great many French-Canadians. There, particularly in the last year to which I referred, French-Canadians would say: 'Come down and visit me.' They took pity on this Newfoundlander up there in Montreal, half sick and that, and we used to go to the french homes, and these people were poor, and I remember visiting many homes where we would share whatever they had. They couldn't speak English, the contact person probably could, up to a point, but the families themselves didn't speak english and I didn't speak much french. But we got along and I learned

french checkers and I learned something else, I learned the tremendous feeling that people can have for each other, and to this day I have a great sense of hospitality and feeling, emotional feeling towards the people of Quebec, and it is built on personal experience.

Mr. Speaker, there is no bitterness in St. John's Centre towards Quebecers. All my constituents share the feelings addressed so eloquently by members of both sides of the House concerning the tactics used at the recent meetings in Ottawa. I won't go into that because people have gone into it very eloquently, however, I am greatly puzzled, I am greatly puzzled by the seeming lack of consistency by some members who have spoken, many of them on the opposite sides of the House, who, on the one hand, decry the lack of openness in these meetings, and the lack of consultation with the Canadian people and who, at the same time, tell us that they themselves are going to ignore the expressed wishes of the majority of their constituents who are against the Accord. Mr. Speaker, I sincerely ask members to reconsider that position. I think we have quite properly chastised those responsible for not consulting, so how can we, after hearing the wishes of constituents, ignore them. If your minds were already made up then why consult? Was that a sham? Mr. Speaker, this is a democracy, a form of Government whose fundamental characteristic is the right of people to control their destiny, not to have it determined for them by elites, especially with respect to the constitution, the very rules by which the country is run. At a time when the peoples

of eastern Europe are claiming and clamoring to be heard surely no members of the House would wish to go in the opposite direction.

My constituents have pointed out some fundamental flaws in the Meech Lake document and the companion resolution. They are opposed to special status for any province, any race, any gender. Two hundred or so years ago after the Plains of Abraham, the uppermost thought in everyone's mind was to devise rules by which the French and the English could live together in some sort of harmony. But since then the country has changed. We have many other immigrants, Irish, German, Ukrainians, Icelanders, Italians, Portuguese, people from Japan, India, China, Vietnam and many others, all with languages and cultures equally valid, and sometimes more distinct than that of English or even French. In fact the old categories of English and French are no longer used much in Canada, instead we use the terms anglophone and francophone, fully realizing that even these terms do not appropriately categorize the Canadian people. Moreover, Mr. Speaker, Newfoundlanders were in this land that is now called Canada before any others except the Innu and the Inuit, earlier even than the French. But I believe, and so do many of my constituents, that it is wrong to give special status to anyone, not even to Newfoundlanders. To do so would perhaps be in violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We are all Canadians and there must be equal rights and privileges for all. Everyone in Canada is an immigrant or the descendant of immigrants.

Everyone. Therefore does it not seem unfair that the cultures of some should be accorded special status and others not. Surely the cultures, the languages of all citizens must be respected and protected. Must we forever be bound by the categories of the past? Must our rights as individual Canadians vary according to the length of time since our ancestors first arrived in this land? Does it seem unfair that some societies should be accorded special status protected by the constitution and others not? Is it not time to put the past behind us and to devise a constitution that reflects the realities of the present and the future, rather than those of two hundred or more years ago. That, Mr. Speaker, is the fundamental constitutional challenge facing Canadians today. After the Accord is defeated Mr. Speaker, Canadians must sit down together and draft a new constitution appropriate for the 21st century and beyond.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Dr. Kitchen: Mr. Speaker, as the poet Tennyson said, 'The old order changes/ Yielding place to new/ and God fulfills himself in many ways/ lest one good custom should corrupt the world.'

Mr. Speaker, just as all Canadian people must have equal rights, so must all Canadian provinces have equal rights. This is not now the case. Canada is dominated by two provinces with special status, namely Ontario and Quebec. This is detrimental to the development of the other provinces of Canada. For example, the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador does not have sufficient economic or political clout in Canada. Billions upon billions of dollars

are being lost to this Province because of the Upper Churchill power contract. The Prime Minister referred to that today. He said he knew about it and uttered the same words ten years ago. But nothing has happened in that ten years. True, our representative signed that contract, but it is still unfair, and the people of this Province continue to be exploited while our pleas for fairness have gone unheeded by our neighbors. This is not the way it should be in Canada. This is not the way it should be.

Similarly, another great resource, our fisheries, has been shamefully mismanaged by a Federal Government dominated by Central Canada. When John Cabot came to this land he put a basket over the side and drew it up full of fish, and now you can fish all summer, as the hon. Minister of Fisheries says, and come up with two little fish. This is what has happened to the greatest resource. When we joined confederation, Mr. Speaker, we brought into this land mass the greatest resources in the North American continent. We brought in the Continental Shelf. Thousands of square miles out there. We brought in iron ore deposits, we brought in fish, we brought in many things, Hydro, we brought in many, many things to this land. And, Mr. Speaker, we are still a province with the highest unemployment in Canada, 16 per cent officially. I suppose about 30 or more per cent unofficially, counting all of the people who are discouraged from working. I have constituents, Mr. Speaker, who do not have enough to eat in this country, who do not have enough to eat and whose places of abode are not fit for people to live in; not many, but some. Secondary

industry is not being developed, fiscal, monetary, economic policy is geared entirely to the needs of Central Canada. High interest rates and the high Canadian dollar are hurting our under developed regional economy.

Mr. Speaker, we have had good representatives in Ottawa over the years. We have had good ones. I will mention some; we have had Frank Moores, we have had Johnny Lundrigan, we have had all sorts of people, good solid - Walter Carter - look, we have had tremendous representatives in Ottawa. They have been good and we have good ones there now too, good people, excellent people. John Crosbie, Brian Tobin, George Baker, all sorts of good, strong people and others as well, and we have always had them - Don Jamieson. But it does not seem to matter because nobody is listening. Nobody is listening. And that is the way things will continue, not only for Newfoundland but for Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and for the western provinces, the Yukon, the Northwest Territories, the aboriginal peoples, until these components of Canada gain more political power. The two additional Senators who may come to Newfoundland with the constitutional add-on will not address the problem of provincial equality. We believe that each province must have equal representation in a Senate that is elected and effective. This we believe will help assure that the concerns of the smaller provinces will be addressed by the Government of Canada. We in St. John's Center, Mr. Speaker, cannot in conscience endorse an Accord that does not address the legitimate constitutional needs of

the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Dr. Kitchen: Mr. Speaker, there is something seriously wrong with the political structure in this country and it has to be addressed.

Mr. Speaker, the Meech Lake Accord proposes to extend the areas of the constitution for which unanimity is required, including the powers of the Senate, the method of selecting Senators, the number of Senators to which a province is entitled, and the establishment of new provinces. While this extended unanimity gives Newfoundland greater means to protect itself from constitutional change which is not in our interest, it also gives any other province the means to prevent provinces like Newfoundland from gaining further power in Confederation, power that we desperately need. We therefore have no alternative, Mr. Speaker, but to oppose the unanimity clause.

Mr. Speaker, to believe that accepting the Meech Lake Accord will bring constitutional peace is nothing but wishful thinking. Meech Lake merely adds new flaws to an already flawed constitution and makes necessary amendments more difficult. Finally, Mr. Speaker, many constituents are opposed to the authority over constitutional matters that seems to have been assumed by the conference of First Ministers. The constitution does not ascribe any powers to conferences of First Ministers, constitutional or otherwise. True, the Constitutional Act of 1982 did require at least three such conferences to be held. Moreover the Accord proposes the

requirement that these be held at least annually. First Ministers need to consult, but are conferences of First Ministers each influenced by his own current political agenda, the vehicle for thoughtful constitutional development, or rather should there be a permanent constitution commission or panel, whose sole job it would be to monitor the constitution, receive submissions, provide for hearings and make recommendations. Mr. Speaker, my time here now is pretty well finished, so I will conclude on a positive note.

Mr. Speaker, Canadians stand taller as a result of the process we have just gone through. Thanks to the flawed process of Meech Lake, for the first time in our history 26 million Canadians have talked constitution and fought constitution. It has been, for all Canadians, an exhilarating intellectual experience. It has been a good experience. It has brought Canadians closer together and forced us to participate in designing the Canada we want for ourselves and for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, we have only had our constitution for nine years, the process has been going on for only nine years. I believe we can get the process right. In rejecting the Meech Lake Accord, the people of St. John's Centre fervently believe that Canadians will continue to live together, and that our constitutional problems will be resolved if appropriately and honestly addressed starting Monday morning.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Eagle River.

Mr. Dumaresque: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Over the last twelve months I have risen in this Legislature on a number of occasions. On each occasion that I arose I put forth my expressions of what I thought was right for my District. I always came here and stood in honesty and integrity. I am approaching the question tonight of ratifying the Meech Lake Accord in the same way. Certainly over the last four or five days, many people in this Province and indeed in my District know that I have been torn on the issue of whether I support or reject the Meech Lake Accord. In the next few minutes Mr. Speaker, I would like to outline why I have been torn. I would like to talk about the historical relationship that I have had, and the people in my riding have had, with the Quebec people. I want to talk about the economic dependence which the coast of Labrador has on the fishery. And also, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about my feelings on the constitution of Canada.

As I have stated before in this House, Mr. Speaker, and as I have stated to the media since this debate came back to Newfoundland, before 1949 my parents dealt with the Province of Quebec when it was a foreign country. Before 1949 my parents and their parents had to go to Quebec and they had to pass by the Newfoundland ranger. They had to check their tariffs, they had to check the goods that they brought across. After 1949 that barrier came down. After 1949, when Canada accepted Newfoundland and Labrador into the Confederation, that barrier came down. The people of the Labrador Straits in particular, who had always been going back and forth

along the Quebec north shore, felt the sense of freedom and certainly they made sure that there was not any animosity between them. My own family, members of my immediate family, have married across the border in Quebec, as well as my people have brought their spouses back to Labrador.

Over the last 41 years there has been a rekindling and a rebuilding of a great relationship between two peoples regardless of where they live. Over the last 41 years we have seen that part of this country break down some of the barriers that were long standing there. Break down some of the barriers that infringed upon family relationships and infringed upon the economic growth of the area.

Mr. Speaker, also, the economic dependency of the fishery is also something I have talked about in this House, time and time again. From L'Anse-au-Clair to Cartwright in my District, there is no other economy, it is the fishery. There is no other livelihood other than to go out into the boat and harvest the cod stocks and any other that you can get. And that is the way I grew up there. With my father in the small fishing boat. Today, Mr. Speaker, we have 1100 people along the coast of Labrador that have not had any income since May 15th because of the ineffectiveness of an unemployment insurance program for fishermen.

Today, Mr. Speaker, we have a salmon fishery that I believe has sent a signal that it is going to die. Because we have brought in a management plan that is insensitive to the coast of Labrador and to the people of Labrador that depend on it so

much. Today, Mr. Speaker, we have seen a licencing policy brought down which is going to say to the people of Labrador that the young people have no future in the fishery. That also, the people that are there in a certain size of boat to go out and harvest fish are going to have to always stay in the same size of boat, and always be in that less competitive position when they have to deal with harvesting the fish off their shores. The plight of the fishermen today, Mr. Speaker, and the plant workers is not very good. The plight of the people along the coast of Labrador is not very good.

Now, what about the constitution of this country. I have risen here in this House before, as I said, and talked about the relationship that we have built up with the Quebec north shore and the people there. I have talked about the economic dependency on the fishery. I also talked about, I think Mr. Speaker, on one occasion at least, about my ideas of federalism and what I believe federalism means, and what that can produce for every part of the country. I have indicated I believe that the constitution of this country is not great. It is not the greatest document that has ever been written, but I would submit, Mr. Speaker, that if you look at the constitution of the United States, if you looked at other constitutions in this world, you will find there are also flaws. I contend that a constitution is for the people. I contend that it will be the people that will change the constitution. I contend that the Constitutional process in this country will never stop. Now in 1982 we brought back a Constitution from Britain, we

brought back a Constitution that only garnered nine signatures, one was left out. We brought back a Constitution that again I think was flawed, and I believe one of the things that has been overlooked in this whole debate and one of the things that has not gotten the attention that it should is that part of the Constitution called the Notwithstanding Clause. That part of the Constitution that was brought over and brought back and signed by nine provinces in 1982, also carried with it the notwithstanding clause. That Notwithstanding Clause, Mr. Speaker, we have seen used by various provinces. We have seen it used certainly over the last twelve to fourteen months, I believe it was a little bit longer in the Province of Quebec. We saw it used in Manitoba also. But we saw it used in the Province of Quebec and I believe to the detriment of some people in Quebec. I contend, Mr. Speaker, that that is one very dangerous tool to ever have held over the heads of all Canadians irregardless of where they have been.

And today as I rise here and as I think about what I have been through it has not been, as I know everybody realizes very easy, but when I have to come to grips with the constitutional amendment that is here before me right now I have to say to myself we are concerned about the distinct society; we are very concerned about the impact that the Distinct Society Clause is going to have on minority rights in Quebec; and also its implications for other parts of the country. I contend, Mr. Speaker, the Distinct Society Clause does not carry the venom, the danger, that I believe is the

unreal implications of the notwithstanding clause.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Dumaresque: Now, Mr. Speaker, do I like what has happened over the last number of months? Do I like the process that we went through where we have been able to go for the last three years without hardly any debate, especially in this Province? Do I like the process where the First Ministers were called in for the last minute meetings? And do I like the process where now we have to come down to the last minute to make a decision affecting the Constitution and the makeup of our country? Obviously not, Mr. Speaker.

My understanding of how the Constitution should be rewritten or added on to, is one where the people do participate, the process should be open, the process should be clear, the people should have ample time to decide and decipher and be able to judge on their own merits what will be in that Constitution. Do I like the unanimity provision? Do I like the fact that every province in this country will have that veto over Senate reform? No, Mr. Speaker, I do not. I do not like that amending formula; I do not like that provision in the Constitution that will prohibit Senate reform.

Do I also, Mr. Speaker, like the fact that right now we have in this country a Department of the Government of Canada of Industry Science and Technology that is being put there as the Regional Development Department of Ontario and Quebec? No, Mr. Speaker, I do not. But I submit, Mr. Speaker, that governments come and

governments go. I submit that there will be a time when the Department of Industrial Science and Technology can be placed in the Government of Canada as the Regional Development Department for Atlantic Canada and Western Canada.

Mr. Speaker, while I have brought all kinds of attention, I guess to my riding, and to my people over the last week, in particular, I have travelled throughout my riding, I have met with the people in every possible way, and I have said to them: on Friday I have to make the biggest decision of my young political career, I have to decide how I am going to vote on the Meech Lake Accord. The people of my riding, I would say 30 per cent or 40 per cent of them, Mr. Speaker, have said to me, you have seven years of university, you have studied Canadian politics, you have said to us that you understand as much as you possibly can in your own limitations about the Constitution and the makeup of this country, we want you to make the judgment for us.

I have also, Mr. Speaker, met a number of people who have said to me, we believe this deal is wrong for Canada. I have met a number of people particularly, and I would say they are the majority in the Labrador Straits, who have said to me we would like to see this Meech Lake Accord ratified, and I asked them why in both cases, the people down below Red Bay in my riding, and the people from there to the Border. The people from Red Bay to the Border, Mr. Speaker, have said to me 'We understood what it was like before 1949. We know what has happened since 1949, we know what kind of relationships we hold now, either it be the business community or

the personal relationships that my family hold there, and other friends of mine hold there with each other. They do not want me, Mr. Speaker, to do anything that will cause that relationship to go sour. They do not want me to do anything that will interfere with the traditional fishing rights that we have always been so used to and fishing together there on the Quebec North Shore and the Labrador Straits. The people down from Cartwright up to Red Bay have said to me use your own judgment, but we do not want you to do anything either that is going to affect the programs of this country that serve us.

And I guess one of the telling points, Mr. Speaker, is when I went to a gentleman in Cartwright, and I said to him: a number of people are telling me, Sir, that the implications for killing the Meech Lake Accord will be the destruction of the country; that we may lose our social programs; we may lose some of our income support, we may lose any other things that we have, and a number of people have been saying to me, Sir, I said, we do not care. We think we have it as bad as we are going to get it. And I said, what do you think? Well he said let me tell you, Sir, I was here before Confederation, I was here, he said, when we had no income support, we had no unemployment insurance program, we had no family allowances, we had none of that, Sir. And he said if any young person has the face to tell you today that it cannot get any worse, he said believe me it was worse, and it can get a lot worse.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Dumaresque: What I am saying, Mr. Speaker, is that I am here

this evening, not as a partisan member of this House, not bringing you a partisan message, I am here as a Canadian, I am here as a proud Labradorian, I am here as somebody who grew up with the people of Quebec and I say, Je dis aux mes amis Francais bienvenue au Canada, bienvenue a Terre Neuve et Labrador. I say to the people of Quebec, I extend to you my hand. Welcome to Canada, welcome to Newfoundland and Labrador, and let us grow together. Let us work together, let us prosper together to bring us into a family that shares and cares. Let us come together as we have never before. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow when I rise in this Legislature to cast my vote I will be supporting the Meech Lake Accord.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Dumaresque: I am supporting the Meech Lake Accord, Mr. Speaker, with a clear conscience, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank my Leader and my Premier for giving me the opportunity, for giving me the privilege, to go through this process and reach my conclusion. You are the man, Sir, in this Province, for whom I hold the greatest esteem and admiration. Today I am making my free choice and I am making it for all the right reasons and for all the right people, the Canadians in Newfoundland and Labrador, the Canadians in Eagle River, and the Canadians on the Quebec North Shore.

Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the President of the Council.

Mr. Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow ask leave to introduce the following resolution.

WHEREAS the employees of the hospital support staff bargaining units, the Waterford Hospital support staff bargaining unit, and the Central Laundry bargaining unit, represented by the Newfoundland Association of Public Employees are participating in a strike; and

WHEREAS the employees of the hospital support staff bargaining units, the Waterford Hospital support staff bargaining unit, and the Central Laundry bargaining unit, represented by the Newfoundland Association of Public Employees are employees for the purpose of the Public Service Collective Bargaining Act 1973; and

WHEREAS the strike is, or will be, injurious to the health and safety of the people of this Province;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED by the House of Assembly by virtue of Subsection 1 of Section 27 of the Public Service Collective Bargaining Act 1973, (a) that the strike of the employees in the hospital support staff bargaining units, the Waterford Hospital support staff bargaining unit, and the Central Laundry bargaining unit, represented by the Newfoundland Association of Public Employees is, or will be, injurious to the health and safety of the people of the Province, (b) that a state of emergency exists in relation to the strike as of 21 June 1990, (c) that the strike of the employees in the hospital support staff bargaining units, the Waterford Hospital support

staff bargaining unit, and the Central Laundry bargaining unit, represented by the Newfoundland Association of Public Employees is forbidden, and, (d) that the employees of the hospital support staff bargaining units, the Waterford Hospital support staff bargaining unit, and the Central Laundry bargaining unit, represented by the Newfoundland Association of Public Employees return to duty upon the publication of this resolution in the Gazette.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

Mr. Warren: Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker.

Let me begin by saying that during the past year on many occasions myself and the Member for Eagle River, to say the least, had diverse opinions, but, Mr. Speaker, tonight the Member for Eagle River showed that he is a true Canadian, a true Labradorian, and he is concerned about the great country that we live in. Never in our history does Labrador need a united voice. By saying, no, to the Meech Lake Accord I want to say to all hon. members here this evening that Labrador will be the most vulnerable. I say, Mr. Speaker, that the artificial border between Quebec and Labrador, that is all it is, artificial, and that is why I am glad this evening to hear the Member for Eagle River express his concern about Labrador. Let me say that I am concerned also about the people of Labrador and the consequences with the failure of the Meech Lake Accord. Several members in this Legislature, Mr. Speaker, have used the quote that I am going to use now. It was a quote from the late Prime Minister

of Great Britain, Sir Winston Churchill, referring to the gallant defence of Britain by the Royal Airforce during the Battle of Britain. When Sir Winston Churchill said, 'Never have so many owed so much to so few.' Tonight, Mr. Speaker, I want to change that famous quote to describe what is happening in this House, never have so few born the responsibility for so many. Mr. Speaker, fifty-two members of this Legislature are responsible, in my opinion, to twenty-six million people in Canada. Our decision tomorrow, in my opinion, will have great consequence on what happens to this great country of ours. In 1967, my family and I moved to Labrador - twenty-three years ago - and during that time I believe that I have given what I could to help the people in Labrador, and in particular I want to say, that during the last eleven years to help the aboriginal people that I represent in the District of Torngat Mountains. The last three days, Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, I had the opportunity to speak to 281 of my constituents. When you consider that there is a voting population of approximately 1400 I would think that is a fair sample. I want to say many of those have said, do not vote for the Accord, and many others have said, vote for the Accord, but, the majority of the people who I spoke to said they do not like the Accord, but for the sake of Canada and for the sake of Labrador please vote for the Accord. That was the message for me to make up my mind, for me to make the decision on their behalf.

I remember going into a home in Nain, Mr. Maggo's home, a senior citizen, and through an interpreter, Mr. Speaker, I asked him questions about the Accord, he

did not even know what the Accord was all about. I said, 'Which way do you want me to vote?' Mr. Maggo said, through the interpreter, and I only wish I had put it down, I wish I had had a tape recorder with me, but he said, 'We have elected you four times. We have elected you twice as a Liberal. We have elected you twice as a Conservative. But we elected you for one reason.' And that is what struck home, Mr. Speaker. He said, 'We elected you because you care for us.' And, Mr. Speaker, as I am speaking here tonight I say to each one of my constituents from Rigolet to Nain, and those out in the small fishing outports, such as Wedge Bay that I still care for each one of those people. In fact, I think if we go back to 1949 when Newfoundland joined Confederation, if we look at the statistics and I can be borne out on this, the majority of the people living in Labrador at the time, a vast, vast majority voted to join Canada. Mr. Speaker, when I hear the Native leaders across Canada uniting and asking for the Meech Lake Accord to be killed, I have to ask myself a very serious question as 80 per cent of my constituents are aboriginal people. But, Mr. Speaker, I want to say I have received not one phone call since this Meech Lake debate started, from any person in my District either for or against the Accord. I talked to members of both organizations, everybody has expressed the danger of the Accord. In fact, I think everyone here agrees this is not a complete document. The document naturally has some flaws. But I think, Mr. Speaker, if we look at the Accord itself, it shows that if this Accord passes there is the opportunity, the door is open for discussions with the aboriginal

peoples. I listened to the Prime Minister today when he said we were that close to having a deal with the aboriginal peoples of this country, Mr. Speaker, I was there at that time, I was there with my colleague from Kilbride when we almost reached that decision for the aboriginal people. And I am confident that with the Premier's interest, and with the Premier's devotion to this great Province of ours, and with the Meech Lake Accord behind us, I am confident that the Premier will have a significant input into arriving at a considerable conclusion with the Native people of this country including the Native people in Labrador, Mr. Speaker.

Today I received a letter, I guess all hon. members did, from Clyde Rose, and I want to quote, Mr. Speaker, a couple of paragraphs, a couple of sentences of his letter, and I have to agree, Mr. Speaker, he said, 'Meech Lake has been a painful process for Canadians.' It has been a painful process, Mr. Speaker, for fifty-two members in this Legislature. 'No corner of our country has been excluded from the great national debate. And it is of some interest that in these last hours before the final decision is made' - Mr. Speaker, listen to the last sentence, it is very, very interesting because it strikes directly to me as a member for the District of Torngat Mountains - 'the focus is on two minority groups the Native people who are the first Canadians, and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who were the last Canadians.' It is most interesting, Mr. Speaker, this whole debate is centering around the first people of our country, the Native people, and centered around the last people of our

country we people from Newfoundland and Labrador. And I want to echo, Mr. Speaker, and I want to read into the record the next paragraph, because I think it is true. We may have differences of opinion, myself and the Premier, but this next paragraph, Mr. Speaker, I have to echo Clyde Wells' words. 'In this debate Premier Clyde Wells has take a legal intellectual stand on a constitutional matter in which he specializes, that has won him a large following in Canada. His popular support is awesome, and probably well deserved, in view of the integrity and courage he has exhibited. Whether the Meech Lake Accord passes or fails Premier Wells is assured of a prominent presence in Canada.' Now, Mr. Speaker, that is from Clyde Rose. And I as one Newfoundlander, Mr. Speaker, will second those comments. Because I think, Mr. Speaker, during the seven days, or as we said the longest dinner in Canadian history, the Premier of our Province has stood tall and proud, and I am proud of him, Sir.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Warren: Mr. Speaker, today I was reading a book and it is called Our Footprints Are Everywhere, Mr. Speaker. It was a book that was compiled for the Inuit of Labrador just to express the frustrations that the Inuit people go through. I want to read a comment made by Tom Tuglavina of Hopedale, and Mr. Speaker, during my last eleven years in this Legislature, 102 parliamentarians have passed through those doors, including the fifty-two of us and there are fifty others who are no longer here. I have tried on numerous occasions, Mr. Speaker, to get the message through to my colleagues on both sides of this

House, the trials and tribulations of the Native people from Labrador. And on many occasions, I am sad to say, in fact I would venture to say, Mr. Speaker, that most occasions, that my colleagues during the last eleven years did not take me seriously.. I am sad to say. Mr Speaker, they are a minority group way up there in Labrador, and unfortunately they were not taken that seriously as I was expressing views on their behalf. Now, Mr. Speaker, Tom Tuglavina in Hopedale said, I quote, 'I think we have a right, I think the white people should follow Inuit rules. And not we follow there rules. I think they should not bother us Inuit. They have so many regulations we have to follow and it is not right for them to interfere with our lives.' Since 1949, when Newfoundland and Labrador joined Canada, the rules of the aboriginal people, what they were used to, changed. They have changed by our Legislature here. They may have changed at that time, by the Premiers and Ministers of the crown, maybe with good intention of improvement, but I say, Mr. Speaker, that the changes that were made were not always in the best interest of the aboriginal people. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I listened to the hon. Minister of Mines and Energy, and I, Mr. Speaker, nearly shed tears listening to him. But I am sure, the hon. Minister can understand what I was going through only three or four months ago, when I found out that his department gave a five year lease to a large mining company to minerals within the lands claims territory that the aboriginal people are discussing with both Governments, without any consultation. That is the kind of feeling, Mr. Speaker, that I am talking about. Last

week, Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday, I went through the same agony when the Minister responsible for wildlife, when I asked him a question, would he lax the rules or regulations as it pertains to hunting for survival, and the Minister said no. That, Mr. Speaker, does bring tears to my eyes, when I know that there are politicians in our Province who are not really recognizing the aboriginal peoples of our own Province. It makes me sad, Mr. Speaker, but hopefully with this Accord, and hopefully tomorrow, when we decide to cast our ballot, when we decide to cast our ballot, Mr. Speaker, we have to ask ourselves will Canada be together next year, or next year or next year? I think the Prime Minister said today, that is hard for us to know now, Mr. Speaker. But, I would hope that my decision tomorrow, will be for a happier and a brighter Canada. Mr. Speaker, I want to say one other thing, if the Accord does not pass, my constituents have more to lose than unemployment insurance or old age security or MCP or family allowance. My constituents have something else to lose, Mr. Speaker, they have the Federal Provincial Native Peoples Agreement. The Inuit people alone have a \$38,000,000, five year agreement with the Federal Provincial Government, shared on a sixty five, thirty five basis. The Innu of Labrador has a ninety/ten \$13,000,000 agreement signed through the Federal Provincial Agreement. I am concerned, Mr. Speaker, if there is no Canada after tomorrow, where will this Government, where will our Province get the monies to look after the interest of those people? Mr. Speaker, I am going to close now, because, I believe my constituents believe that I

will continue to work on their behalf. They believe that I have the interest of every single citizen from Rigolet to Nain in my heart. They believe that what I will do tomorrow is, in my belief, in their best interest, the best for them. Today I received a phone call from a lady here in St. John's. And maybe, she might be in the gallery tonight, I do not know. And she asked me was I going to be voting for my constituents or against my constituents. Mr. Speaker, each one of us in this Legislature tomorrow will be voting for some of them and we will be voting against some of them. That is part of democracy. But I believe, Mr. Speaker, that tomorrow, when I cast my vote, when I cast my vote, Mr. Speaker, I will be voting for the majority of the people in my District, the aboriginal people and the other twenty percent. Because I believe that they got confidence in what I am doing on their behalf. In closing, Mr. Speaker, during the past few months over in Europe we saw the Berlin wall fall, the Berlin wall, Mr. Speaker, came down. East and West Germany joined hands. All we are asking now Mr. Speaker, is not to build a wall between Newfoundland and Labrador and Quebec, not to have any obstructions between our Province and the people of Quebec. The people of Quebec, Mr. Speaker, are out there trying to tear down that wall, they are out there now, Mr. Speaker, at this hour trying to tear down that wall. And why should not we fifty-two politicians from the last Province to join Confederation, why cannot we get our chisel and our shovel and help those people to tear that little wall down, because if we do not do it tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, the next day, it may be too late.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Pleasantville.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Noel: Mr. Speaker, I am a Newfoundlander. I know we are all Newfoundlanders here, but I do not know if I am a person who can say, I am a Canadian first, as some people say. I may be a Newfoundlander first, or maybe I am a Canadian and a Newfoundlander, which is the way I believe this country is supposed to operate. I don't know that we have to be one first, and I would prefer that I didn't have to be one first. But if this country does come apart the way some people say, I expect that I will be with Newfoundland at that time, so I think I would have to be considered a Newfoundlander, probably first.

My purpose in politics is to try and help develop a political and economic structure in which our people can achieve a better standard of living, and a greater sense of dignity, and pride. That is my function in this House, and that's why I have been elected. That's what my constituents want me to do, I believe, to achieve something for them and for our Province. That is not to say that I don't also wish to achieve things for our country, for our fellow Canadians, I wish to do that, but I believe my first responsibility is to the people who elected me.

Our people and our Province have tremendous economic capabilities that have been undeveloped throughout our history, they have

not been developed as they should have been in our federation.

I have been an opponent of the Meech Lake Accord because I believe we can achieve a system of Government in this country that would enable us to develop our economy and enable our people to develop far more progressively, far more rapidly, and far more within our potential. But I believe to do that as Canadians we have to have more say in how the national Government operates.

We are part of a country of ten provinces and two territories which is governed by the House of Commons in which there is representation by population. A House which is essentially controlled by the two large provinces who have something like 60 per cent of the seats there, and naturally, it legislates primarily in the interests of those two provinces.

The representatives of the people in those provinces, in carrying out their normal duties in their normal fashion, naturally give precedence to the interests of their own constituents, as I think we have to do. That is what I have been hoping to achieve in my entire participation in this Meech Lake debate.

That is more opportunity for our people and more say in how this country functions, and I believe all of the less populous provinces have to pursue that, if we are to make Canada operate more in our interest. I have never believed that we would get an effective Senate, which is, I think, a way of achieving more say in how this country operates for the smaller provinces.

I think that perhaps what an effective Senate may accomplish for us, is overestimated in the minds of many of our people. It would have been one thing if we had had an effective Senate when this country began and we had evolved through legislation passed by both Houses, then I think we would have a much better balanced country. We would have a country in which Newfoundlanders had a standard of living nearer the national average in which our per capita income was not a mere 56 per cent, an increase of only 3 per cent since the time we became Canadians, in which it was not a mere 56 per cent but closer to the national average, and I believe it could even be above the national average.

But I do not think we are going to get an effective Senate voluntarily from Ontario and Quebec. I thought one way we might get it would be if this country reached such a stage of crisis that it might be in danger of falling apart, perhaps then, but I guess, as you know, the past few weeks the country has reached that stage, but what have we gotten, what have we even gotten in promises?

Even the visitors we have had in this House in the past two days, the Prime Minister of the country and the Premier of Ontario came here and spoke primarily about the concerns of Quebec and the country. Presumably they came here to persuade us to support the Meech Lake Accord, and if that was the case, I think they should have spoken more about our interest. They should have demonstrated more awareness of our commitment to getting a better deal for our people, and they didn't do that, at this crucial time in the

country.

They talk about supporting a reform Senate. Quebec talks about it and Ontario talks about it and the people in the House of Commons talk about it. But what they mean by a reform Senate is not what we mean by a reformed Senate, and what they will be prepared to agree to, in my view, will not make a great deal of difference in how this country operates.

I think if we passed the Meech Lake Accord, we will not get an affective Senate in this country, and if we failed to pass it, we may not get one either, so that presents quite a dilemma for the less populous and less affluent provinces of this country. How we are going to deal with it? - I don't know. I don't know. Quebec is not the only province in this country which needs to think about its options, you know.

A number of times I have made the case as to how Newfoundland pays its way in Confederation. So many Canadians believe that we are kept by other Canadians, that we don't pay our own way. They forget about the tax dollars that we send off to Ottawa. They forget about the profits made by central Canadian companies for whom we are a captive market. They forget about the extent to which this country benefits from our resources, and they forget about the extent to which our cost of living is inflated by the fact that we are Canadians.

I have here an article that was published in the Toronto Globe and Mail, December 26, 1989, comparing prices in the cities of Toronto, Ontario and Washington D.C.. Just to cite a few prices as an example of the high cost of living in this

country that has such a fabricated economy, and such a fabricated political structure. Tide laundry detergent was \$3.55 in Canada and \$2.78 in Washington, and these are in Canadian dollars. Those are substantial differences. Perrier water: forty-four cents in Canada and fifteen cents in Washington. 2 per cent milk: ninety-five cents in Canada and sixty-four cents in Washington. Maytag washing machines: \$900 in Canada, \$685 in Washington. You know this is evidence of the cost of living in this country, which is a cost to Newfoundlanders, a cost of being Canadian for Newfoundlanders.

Mr. Speaker, I believe it's eleven o'clock and I would adjourn the debate at this point.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like, by leave of the House, to start our session tomorrow morning at 9:00 a.m. instead of 10:00 a.m. and I intend to call as the first order of business the resolution that I introduced tonight.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Simms: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have no particular problem accommodating the request. We realize that legislative measures will have to be dealt with and I guess the understanding is that the first item of business being the resolution with respect to the hospital support staff. When that is completed, if it is completed, we would then resume the Meech Lake debate at the same point where we left off tonight, with the speaker, either from that side again or this side.

So there would be no problem.
Nine o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: This House stands
adjourned until tomorrow, Friday
at nine of the clock, in the
morning.