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Speaker: Honourable Thomas Lush

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The House met at 10:00 a.m.

Mr. Speaker (Lush): Order, please!

The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, as all hon. members know, this is a very important day in this particular House and we have important matters to discuss. But it is also a very sad day in this particular House, because, Mr. Speaker, I learned just yesterday of the sudden death of the father of the Leader of the Opposition. He is being buried in Fleur de Lys this afternoon at, I believe, 2:00 o'clock, and the Leader of the Opposition is not in his seat by reason of the sudden passing of his father.

I want, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Government and, I am sure, on behalf of all hon. members, and the Opposition House Leader will, I am sure, want to address the matter, express to Mr. Rideout and to the entire Rideout family the sincere condolences of the House on this sudden passing, and to express to the entire family our deep concern and our sincere appreciation for the circumstances in which the Leader of the Opposition finds himself, that he cannot be in his place on this very important day by reason of that, to express to the family our most sincere sympathy.

Mr. Speaker: The Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Simms: Mr. Speaker, of course we appreciate the remarks of the Premier and we want to be associated with him and would support Your Honour sending a message of condolence to the Leader of the Opposition, to Mr. Rideout's wife and, indeed, to the

entire family, of which, by the way, there were twelve children, I think, in two families. So it is a very large family.

Mr. Alfred Rideout was ninety years of age when he passed away on Monday, so he had lived a good life. He spent many of his years as a fisherman, as a logger and as a carpenter, and, indeed, he only really retired from that kind of activity about six years ago, at the age of eighty-four. So I guess there is a chance for some of us yet even. He was a great Confederate. He was a great campaigner for Confederation, and he was very active in his whole life politically. I think he is a good Newfoundlander, a true Newfoundlander and we would want to remember him through Your Honour.

I might add, while I have the floor, for the benefit of anybody who might be listening, that the Government has kindly made some arrangements to have representation from both sides of the House attend the funeral this afternoon, at 2:00 p.m., in Fleur de Lys. I just want to make mention of the fact that the Member for Kilbride, our caucus chairman, and the Member for Mount Pearl will be representing our caucus, and I am not quite sure yet, but I believe maybe the Minister of Justice and another one will be leaving. So if anybody notices that those members are absent this morning and this afternoon, obviously that will be the reason. They will, hopefully, be back tonight. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Baker: Thank you, Mr.

Speaker. Before we begin, I would like to, very briefly, go over some of the ground rules. They are quite simple, and this has been done by agreement. First of all, the presence of the cameras in the House and the unique position of the press and so on, this was done by leave of the House. As well, in terms of the speaking we have agreed that the Premier and Leader of the Opposition could have up to an hour, that most other members would perhaps try to limit their speeches to around twenty minutes. We are not going to set any hard-and-fast rules there, Mr. Speaker, we have general agreement that it will be around that or less. So this would expedite matters. We feel, on both sides I believe, that opinions which are expressed perhaps can be expressed as well in twenty or twenty-five minutes as in thirty minutes, and hon. members need feel no need to fill in twenty minutes or twenty-five or thirty minutes. We recognize that on the average perhaps twenty minutes would be reasonable. Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Opposition House Leader to confirm these arrangements, and ask him if I have left out anything.

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

Mr. Simms: No, Mr. Speaker, I do not think anything has been left out. It is pretty straightforward. It is, and I emphasize the fact, by leave of members of the House. The speaking arrangement was agreed to in terms of a twenty minute speaking time, but there will be members, I am sure, from time to time, who may want to use their perfect right of having thirty minutes. If that is the case, I

do not think there would be any reason to be upset over that.

The only other thing I might mention for the benefit of some is that we have also arranged and agreed to have a Question Period tomorrow at 3:00 p.m., I guess, for the normal thirty minute Question Period.

Other than that, throughout the entire three days set aside the normal Orders of the Day will be dispensed with. I think that has been the agreement.

Mr. Speaker: Might I ask one of the hon. House Leaders to, for clarification of the Chair and members as well, with respect to guest speakers, I wonder if that has been -

The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, I have extended an invitation to the Prime Minister and to all of the Premiers to address the House, if they wish. I think it is important that we hear the points of view of other people in the country, because the decision we will make has an effect beyond our boundaries and it is important that we consider the points of view of other parts of the nation.

I am grateful to the Opposition for consenting to this, and we will shortly have the pleasure of hearing from Premier Peterson. We propose to do it very simply. What we intend to do is Your Honour will adjourn the House formally, and Your Honour will retain the Chair and invite Premier Peterson to attend and address the House.

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

Mr. Simms: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Just for clarification. As I understand the process, it would be at the appropriate time, when the First Minister is ready to come in, the debate would be adjourned, he would speak, then, following that, the debate would just resume.

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

Mr. Baker: Yes, Mr. Speaker, that's correct. The House will adjourn during pleasure and the Speaker, I understand, will remain in the Chair. Is that correct?

Mr. Speaker, I think we have taken care of all that business, so I would like now, Sir, to call Motion 3.

Mr. Speaker: Motion 3.

The hon. the Minister of Justice.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Dicks: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The motion before the House is in honour of the commitment the Premier made at the First Ministers' Conference last week, and that was to bring before the Legislature of Newfoundland, given that we did not have sufficient time to pass a referendum or to cause a referendum to be held in the Province, a motion that the Meech Lake Accord be approved, together with the recent add-ons at the First Ministers' Conference.

At the outset of this debate, Mr. Speaker, I would like to clarify for the Government that it is not a Government measure. This does not have the undivided support of the Government, and it remains to be seen whether it has the

undivided support of any members of this House. But what we have done is to cause to be held in this House an open vote.

Now, Mr. Speaker, approximately a week ago this House recessed for the purpose of enabling hon. members to consult with their constituents. There has been some concern as to what a free vote actually means, but I think that if we reflect on what we have done over the last week, then it should be very clear what our obligation is here today. People would like to consider this to be a matter of conscience, but on a personal basis I reject that argument. What we have done is to consult and, I suspect, determine, over the last week or so, what our constituents want. There are, no doubt, those who would say that as being the representatives of the electorate, we do not have that obligation but should exercise our reason in some form or fashion, distinct from the wishes of our electorate, and make a decision on that basis. Mr. Speaker, I reject that, and I reject it because the wishes and views of the constituents whom we represent are what has caused us to be here in the first place. We have the honour and privilege of serving those constituents and, in my view, at least, their wishes should be determinative. I can really think of no better guide in this matter than to reflect on the words of Abraham Lincoln, who said, "Why should there not be a patient confidence in the ultimate justice of the people? Is there any better or equal hope in the world? Of course not."

Mr. Speaker, in April of 1989 I made a decision that personally was a very important one in my life and that has caused many

changes, and that was to run for the Liberal Party in the election that was held on April 20 of that year. One of the main reasons I decided to do so was that I believed very strongly in the views the Premier had espoused and articulated concerning the Meech Lake Accord. He set forth during the course of that campaign, and subsequently, very serious concerns that confronted the nation and that reflected the views, not only of the Liberal Party and Newfoundlanders, but of Canada as whole. Those included concerns about the distinct society, the amending formula, the provincial power of appointment to the Senate and to the Supreme Court, authority over immigration and, also, the federal spending power.

However, having been at last year's First Ministers' Conference, in November, and again last week, in Ottawa, I must now admit that my concerns run much deeper than the mere concern about process and substance, that what is at issue at this point in time, to my mind, besides the substantive issues, are those that go to process, because that process has demonstrated itself to be fatally flawed. If we think for a moment, in criminal law, and by and large in law in general, one minor procedural defect can result in a very serious charge being dismissed. That is the importance of process in law, and I would suggest to this hon. House and hon. members that we bear an obligation to consider the process that has brought about this Accord and this Agreement for us to consider here today. We do not have to reflect or consider very far before we will come to the conclusion that that process is so wrong as to form in itself the

basis for a reasoned rejection of the Meech Lake Accord, that this issue is so important, as has been often said, it cannot be left to eleven First Ministers in private to determine what the constitutional future of the country will be, and that has been, to date, the process that has been followed.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there is another process. We could have a constitutional convention, but to get into a discussion of this at this point in time, when the substantive issue is before us, I think would be to do that process a disservice and I leave it for another occasion on which we may enlarge upon it. But I think it is fair to say that in all our deliberations we must consider and, indeed, are honour bound to consider, whether or not we agree with the process through which these agreements have come into place. And if we, for one moment, are agreed that that process is wrong, then we should consider that to be a reasonable basis for rejection.

Mr. Speaker, what we have seen over the past year or so I believe to be the constitutional equivalent of seppuku, ritualized national self-evisceration, that we are in the process of taking out from the innards of this country those elements of Canada which are distinct, which go together and should go together to form a united whole, but which rather, in this process, have been taken out and form the basis for great disunity, and great potential harm to this country. I believe that the process of separating out what are distinctive elements in societies within Canada is dangerous, is divisive and ultimately

destructive.

Mr. Speaker, it is not too late for us to reverse this process. We are here today with the possibility of doing that. I believe that a nation is, by definition, the whole and not the parts, that it is unity from diversity, order from chaos, form from substance, and that if we do not see that, if we do not have as our constitutional view a united Canada and not one divided into its constituent elements that will be divided out, that will no longer form a united whole, then we, ourselves, do a great disservice to the country that will ultimately result in its destruction.

Mr. Speaker, I think I have elaborated on my concerns as to the process and the reasons I believe that process to be wrong. I would now like to consider the substance of the Meech Lake Accord, because that equally, if not moreso, goes to the kernel of the issue we must consider.

Mr. Speaker, we have before us, in the schedules to the Meech Lake Accord on the Order Paper and in the Orders of the Day, on page 5, the Meech Lake Accord itself, those amendments and the subsequent agreements of the Premiers and the Prime Minister at last week's First Ministers' Conference. It is fair to say that the five concerns of Newfoundland which I earlier alluded to have not been addressed. The proposed future constitutional amendments, which were added on, take the form of amendments proposed and future constitutional agendas. They do not have the force of law and, in my view, have the substance of cotton candy; they will melt in our mouth as a country; they will

not be realized and they will not form any basis on which we can go forward as a united nation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it is clear to any member who has taken the time, as I am sure we all have, to review these amendments that our concerns remain unresolved. Both in process and substance we have a document that is, in my view, in error. The Prime Minister and others would tell us, in Newfoundland and this Legislature, that we should approve it, that the 1987 Meech Lake amendments were in error or partially flawed, that the recent ones are not entirely good, but they are the best that could be done. We are urged, in effect, Mr. Speaker, to accept two errors and somehow believe that out of this will come some great right for the country. I reject that view, because I believe its lack of rationality speaks for itself.

But that is not the issue for us to decide today. It is not whether Meech Lake is flawed in process or in substance, although it may help us decide the ultimate issue. And the issue, as I see it at least, is whether Meech Lake, the document flawed as it is, is so seriously flawed that we as legislators should not pass it, or whether, despite its flaws, the danger of separatism in Quebec would be so assisted as to be ultimately and more destructive to the nation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I reject that logic and I will tell you and my fellow legislators the reason why. There are those who argue, first of all, that the unique role of the Quebec Legislature in affirming the face of what is a distinct society in Quebec is already present and was recognized

by the Supreme Court of Canada in the Sign Law Case, or Ford, as it is also known. But there is a division of legal opinion on that issue, and I do not propose or suggest that we will resolve it here today or during the course of this debate. But, again, I do not believe that that is the crucial element to be decided. Even if that were the case, and I doubt that it is, what is disturbing is the lack of argument on the merits of the Meech Lake proposals.

We are urged to pass this Accord, not because it is good for the country, but because of the perceived threat of separatism in Quebec, and I suggest that if we pass it, it will foster that notion elsewhere in the country.

Now this whole concept that we should react to pass something that is wrong for the future of this country on the basis of a perceived threat of separatism, really essentially bothers me for several reasons. The first is that it is wrong to make decisions on the basis of fear rather than principle. We should not decide whether or not there is a danger of separation, but should go forward on the basis of what is the right constitution for Canada. We cannot let constitutional decisions be dictated by or influenced by separatists who are committed, not to the unity, but, rather, to the dissolution of the country. The demons of separatism must be exorcised, not enshrined in constitutional documents.

Mr. Speaker, fear is among the worst motives on which humans can act, and I suggest to hon. members that if they for a moment consider that particular aspect of the matter, that they reject it out of

hand. It is not in accord with the heritage of this country, nor particularly Newfoundlanders, to accept and go forward in their lives on the basis of fear.

There is a second danger in this whole notion of separatism, that even if we were to accept that there is some question as to separative sentiment somewhere in this country, we should also recognize that separatism in itself is self-destructive, that once any group in any part of a united entity, be it a country or whatever, espouses and takes to itself the notion of a particular distinctive or cohesive group having the right to separate from others they have much in common with, then they have within it, and that idea has within it, the seeds of its own destruction. For if a particular group or province, shall we say, can, on the basis of some distinctive different identity than the rest of the country, be able to remove itself from that country, then cannot any group within that province which has a similar distinctive identity also be able to withdraw from the province? so, that, Mr. Speaker, if you accept the notion that we are going to allow any group in this country, be it provincial or otherwise, to secede from the federation, then we also have to enforce that principle and honour it so that any group within that province which has an equally cohesive view of itself should equally be allowed to divide itself from that Province and remain part of the federation. So I suggest to those in this country and in this Legislature who consider that separatism in itself is a valid agenda or a valid future for any part of this country, that they are mistaken, that that notion in logic and

spirit and emotion is in itself self-defeating and that the principle should be rejected out of hand.

The third reason I believe we should reject any fear of separatism is that it smacks of appeasement. We have often heard the suggestion that history repeats itself and that those who do not remember the lessons of history are doomed to repeat them. And we do not have to search very far back in our history, as part of the English speaking and French speaking world and the multicultural groups that have enriched this country, to find a parallel in this century. And for my own view I think of the year 1938, and it is my view that Brian Mulroney is our Neville Chamberlain, that the distinct society and Meech Lake are peace in our time.

Mr. Speaker, I think if one thing is very clear in this century and others it is that appeasement does not work, that we must reject that out of hand, that we cannot act out of fear; we cannot think that by passing a flawed document that we are, therefore, going to defeat a notion of separatism. I believe that whether it is out of fear or out of any such emotion, we can only reject these notions and look to some other rationale for either approval or rejection.

But, Mr. Speaker, let us leave aside the whole notion of the matter of separatism and address what for many people in this country is the key element in this debate, and that is the question of a distinct society. I believe that within those two words we have the clash of two visions of what this country should be. On the one hand, there has been a

historic view put forward of two nations. On the other hand, we as a Party, and to some extent as a Province, have affirmed a different view that I believe enjoys greater acceptance in this country, and that is of ten equal provinces that form one united country.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I personally do not espouse separate identities for English and French Canada. This would ghettoize us. I believe we must affirm a common or, perhaps, uncommon vision of a bilingual, multicultural nation. I do not suggest that it will be easily achieved, but it is certainly one worth striving for. There are, no doubt, those who would suggest that a bilingual Canada is somehow an affront to Quebec or has within it anti-Quebec sentiment. That notion is malicious and wrongheaded. It is our duty, in our time and generation, to hand down undiminished to those who come after us the vision of a bilingual Canada, one that all the distinct groups within this country can identify with. We do a disservice to our children, to our grandchildren and to this nation as a whole if we, in any sense, agree to divide out, to separate, to take distinctive elements of one sort or another and have those as a basis for our nation and not a strong, united vision of what this country can and should be.

Mr. Speaker, we are distinctive in Canada, not only for our cultural and multicultural heritage, but also for our tolerance and justice, and to accept a different view of this nation would do injustice to those values which we so cherish.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that we may all claim in this country, with greater and lesser legitimacy, to be distinctive. We Newfoundlanders form, among many others in this country, a great distinctive cultural group, and there are many others who can lay equal claim in Quebec, among the aboriginal peoples of Canada, those who share a central European, African and Asian heritage. We are distinctive but, again, I do not believe that to say we must espouse a unified group of Canada is, in any sense, to do harm to that notion. Canada is not anything other than a mosaic of many countries who have contributed greatly to our culture, our nation, our thought and, to some extent, our political process, and if we, for a minute, allow the passage of a measure that will do harm to that notion, then, I think, we are going to destroy ultimately the values that hold us together.

Now, Mr. Speaker, over the past week or so I have polled my constituents in Humber West. I have done that by telephone, I have done it in person and by newspapers. The results of that consultation with my constituents, in the absence of a referendum, is very clear. My constituents reject the Meech Lake Accord by 80 per cent. It is a view that is based on reason and that is based on a vision of Canada that the Meech Lake Accord does not satisfy or engender. As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, I feel honour bound to honour the wishes of my constituents and not to act contrary to or in the absence of that consideration. I can say, for the reasons I have stated, I do so wholeheartedly and in complete agreement with the wishes and views of my constituents.

Before closing, Mr. Speaker, I would commend to hon. members some thoughts from John Kennedy, the late President of the United States, who, in addressing members of the Legislature in the United States left this thought with them: 'When at some future date the high court of history sits in judgement on each of us, recording whether in one brief span of service we fulfilled our responsibilities to the State, our success or failure in whatever office we hold will be measured by the answer to four questions: First, were we truly men of courage? Second, were we truly men of judgement? Thirdly, were we truly men of integrity? Fourthly, were we truly men of dedication?'

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are men and women in this House who must consider those questions. Just let me say that I believe we have an obligation to courageously withstand the fearmongers. Let us with honesty and integrity exercise a reasoned judgement. Meech Lake is a dangerous, destructive constitutional proposal. We must, for all the reasons enumerated, reject it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

Mr. Speaker: All in favour 'Aye'.

Some Hon. Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: Those against 'Nay'. Carried.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: On behalf of hon. members, I would like to extend a warm and cordial welcome on this very important, significant and historic occasion to the Premier of Ontario, the Hon. David Peterson, and to call upon the Premier to officially introduce him to the House.

The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I have said before, this is an occasion when the Legislature of this Province is debating and deciding upon an issue that affects, and could have an effect on the whole country, so it is entirely appropriate that we take into account, not only matters that are of concern to us within the Province, but matters that are of concern to the whole nation. By reason of that, I have extended an invitation to the Prime Minister and all of the Premiers to address the House and express to us their views respecting the matter we are debating. It is important that we hear and understand the views of distinguished Canadians beyond our borders.

I welcome the distinguished Premier of Ontario and say to him that he does this House and the people of this Province great honour today by coming to speak to us and to, I am sure, enlighten us with his views and his concerns for the nation. I have been greatly moved and impressed by the comments he has made privately to me and in First Ministers' meetings, and I ask all members of the House, on both sides, to pay particular attention to the very important comments he will make. I know I express the wishes of the

Opposition, to whom I express gratitude, also, for their willing consent to extend this invitation. Having expressed their gratitude on behalf of all members, I extend to you, Premier Peterson, the invitation to address us, and express to you our great pleasure that you have agreed to do so. You are most welcome.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier Peterson: Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly, should I say at the outset that I am delighted, personally, to have accepted your invitation, your personal invitation, to attend on this historic opportunity to share my views with members of the Assembly. I recognize this is a rare privilege, if not a unique honour, and I also know how dangerous it is on an occasion like this, when unanimous consent is required, for someone like me to speak here, and I thank you all for the privilege you have accorded me. I was here, I think in November last, and I received a very warm greeting in your House from you, Mr. Speaker. I was delighted to attend, and you reminded me on that occasion that after the Act of Union, in 1949, Ontario donated the Chair in which you sit, and may I tell you how handsome you look in that Chair. And, Sir, regardless of the outcome of this discussion, you can keep that Chair, Mr. Speaker. I would like you to know that.

This is, indeed, an historic occasion and probably, I would suggest, as important an issue as any to which we have applied our collective minds as a nation. There are lots of difficult issues in politics, lots of pressures,

issues come and go, as all of us know who have practiced in the crucible of a Legislature in our lives.

And it is not as if this will affect an unemployed fish worker or an unemployed auto worker tomorrow morning or next week but, I would argue, that it will have as profound consequences for the future of our country as, perhaps, any discussion that we have ever had. And I know that this Legislature and all the members herein are approaching it with solemnity and seriousness, and I am proud to be part of those discussions.

I phoned my wife this morning and she wished me well and she said: 'David, this is probably the most important speech you will ever make in your whole life'. I thanked her very much for taking the pressure off me, and I am proud to participate.

I come not to lecture, not to cajole, not to threaten, not to plead, but to share my views of this debate as someone who has been intimately involved in this discussion, really for the last four years, but even beyond that. I was one of those as a student, as I know many of you were, who followed the developments of Quebec since the beginning of the Revolution Tranquille in the 1960s, as we as a country, Quebec as a province, all of us, were trying to work out the problems there in that community, and as we went through a number of difficulties, crises, if you will, referendums, elections of separatist Government, all trying to address our minds to that problem and the great question was always asked, Well, what does Quebec want? How do we work out a

confederation that accommodates their needs and hopes and aspirations as well as contributing to the greater unity and to the greater whole?

I come, not really in a position to speak for all of Canada, because I would never be so presumptuous, and I cannot even stand in front of you and say I speak for all of Ontario, because there are many people in my province who disagree with me. This has been an issue that is beyond partisanship. It is as difficult, as I said, as any issue that we have ever faced, it has caused many splits in my Party and other parties, as well, right across this nation. People of conscience, people of judgement wrestle with this most fundamental question.

But I do come to you as one who cares passionately about this country, as one who believes that we can make it whole and make it better for the future, that we have far more things in common that we do that separate us, yet, at the same time, we can recognize and understand the uniqueness and specialness of various areas and accommodate their special needs as we have always done historically, and will do in the future as well, and go on together and build a stronger confederation and more unity of purpose.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, it is important in this discussion to review, if I may, just a little of the history. Many of you know that the most important changes probably in our Constitution occurred just in this last decade, in 1982, and you remember the discussions leading up to that. In my view, it was an heroic achievement, an achievement of

historical proportions, to take men and women at that time, who had dramatically different views on the country, and you will remember the debates with Mr. Trudeau and Stirling Lyon and some of the western premiers, they were all there, and it looked like it was an absolutely intractable position, yet, through a process of compromise and a process of accommodation, the Constitution was brought home for the first time in over a hundred years. We now had the power to amend our own Constitution, brought in a Charter of Rights, which has had a dramatic effect on this country in the last eight years, and we now had power over our own future.

But there was a price paid, and it was not perfect. That is not to in any way denigrate what the leadership of the country at that time did. But there were two omissions, or, if you like, one omission and one massive compromise. The notwithstanding clause was a massive compromise. It was far more devastating in its consequences than anything that we are discussing today at Meech Lake. And we have seen the use of that notwithstanding clause in Quebec and in other provinces, for that matter, and we know that the use of that has poisoned the debate in this country and there is a great tendency to relate the two. But in fact and in law, the notwithstanding clause and Meech Lake have nothing to do with each other. And one of the points I believe I have in agreement with your Premier is that we would both like to get rid of that clause. There is not unanimity on that question, there is not even a general consensus on that question, but I hope some day in the future we will be able to get rid of that. But that was a price

paid at the time, because without it, we would not have what we have today. But I also say that had I been there in 1982, and I was not, but had I been there, I would have been proud to sign on, and I would have said at the time it was a price worth paying.

But there is another price that was paid, and that was the price of patriating the Constitution without Quebec's signature. Now, in fairness, Quebec would not have signed anything at that time. Quebec was headed by a separatist government whose sole object was to destroy the Confederation. Someone in our recent discussions quoted one of the Premiers as saying, 'Well, Mr. Parizeau's sole object is to destroy the nation.' When Mr. Parizeau was asked about that he said, 'He is absolutely correct. That is my object, to destroy the Nation.' But then the question became, Well, how do we bring Quebec to the table? How do we get them participating in the other discussions about Senate reform, aboriginal self-government, and other things?

The political leadership of the day rightly, in my view, made the judgment to go ahead without Quebec. They felt, and again I think rightly, that there were strong Francophone spokesmen in Ottawa representing Quebec who had every bit as legitimate a voice to speak for Quebec as did the Provincial Government of the day. And then we as Federalists and as Canadians were blessed, in my view, by an election in Quebec that brought a Federalist Government after ten years. Mr. Bourassa came, and he had had a thorough discussion with his Party and with his Province about joining Confederation, signing on, becoming a willing partner, and he

reduced all of these proposals to five. It started originally about six years ago, in a document called 'Maitriser L'Avenir'. It went through a document called the Beige Paper that was submitted for public discussion. Those who were interested are familiar with it. He brought that to an election in 1985 and had a mandate to negotiate his way into full partnership in Confederation. There was nothing secret about that. It was not a private discussion. It was a thorough and total public discussion. Admittedly, it did not have the attention that some of our other discussions have, but it was all there for everyone to see.

Four years ago, the Premiers gathered - the Prime Minister was not there - the Premiers gathered at one of our annual conferences in Edmonton, and all of us together signed a document called the Edmonton Declaration, and we agreed then, together, that our first priority was to bring Quebec into full partnership in the Constitution. It was an initiative right across this country from coast to coast.

So we went on from there to the Meech discussions, and those had all been discussed publicly. Admittedly, again, it did not have a high degree of public attention. I remember personally, walking up the road to Meech Lake, where I had never been in my life, and, with any luck, will never go back again, and I remember people asking me, 'Well, are you optimistic? Do you think this thing can be put together?' Because nobody thought this could be put together. This problem has bedeviled this country for a hundred and twenty-three years, and if you want to look beyond

that, since the Plains of Abraham in 1759. This is not a new or unique problem, it is a problem that has always been there. And the history of our constitutional debates in this country, the history of the great debates in Parliament, is filled with this discussion. So you, ladies and gentlemen, are part of a major historical debate, not just one that is subject to the pressures of today.

We went to Meech Lake and put together the principles of a partnership with Quebec, for Quebec to become a full member. We were not trying to solve all the world's problems. We were not trying to deal with all the problems of aboriginal self-government or Senate reform or fisheries, or whatever, but we were trying to bring Quebec to the table so they could participate in the future, recognizing that our Constitution, in Canadian terms, was very, very new. It was only since 1982. We did not, at that point, invent the amending procedure, or the three-year time period required under it, that came out of 1982. And had we unilaterally taken it upon ourselves to change that process, you can imagine the criticism that would have come forward. We did the best we could, perhaps, and I think we have all learned a lot about some of the inadequacies of that process.

So we put it together at Meech Lake and we subsequently went on to Langevin, where the legal niceties were all put together. That was seen, at the time, to be an historic achievement. People across this country - and there were dissenters, no question - but, by and large, it enjoyed a very high degree of popular

support. People thought it was wonderful. You know how rare it is to get agreement on anything in this country, but to have eleven Governments sign on was seen as absolutely an amazing achievement. Little did we know then some of the changes that would develop in our country over the subsequent three years. There were changes of Provincial Governments, no question about that, including in this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

There were changes in mood. There have been many hurtful things done and said in this country, including many in my own province, which I deeply regret. Many things have been transmitted back and forth to each other, and we have seen a sensitive nation react in many ways to these things. Bill 178, that I referred to - English Canada has changed dramatically the support for Meech Lake, even though it is not legally related in any way. And we have seen, at the same time, a very high degree of symbolism overtake this debate. In many ways, in Quebec, Meech Lake, today - forget the legal niceties for a moment, I will talk about those in a moment - is seen as a symbol of belonging. It is a question of, in French the word is 'appartenance', the symbol of acceptance, just as, outside of Quebec, many people have used Meech Lake as a way to express frustration about Quebec, about the fact that they are demandeurs and too noisy and always, they think, whining about something or have special status, getting something we are not getting, a way to express their hostility. So we have seen all of these dimensions to this debate and it's forced a much wider discussion as well into the very essence of our

Canadianism. What are we? What kind of federation? How do we put together this diverse population? How do we reconcile the distinctiveness of Newfoundland and Labrador with the distinctiveness of British Columbia or Ontario, Quebec or Manitoba? And how do we put all of that together in a federation? Because it is not easy as you know. Some populations, some provinces, are dramatically different than others. Look at the linguistic component today of New Brunswick - and you will be graced by the presence of the Premier of New Brunswick this afternoon - who can talk from a unique perspective of the only bilingual province in this country. Newfoundland and Labrador tends to be more homogeneous than other provinces. Toronto today: over 50 per cent of the people in Toronto are not native born French or English. We teach in our schools in Toronto over 80 different languages today, not just the obvious ones like Italian, and Greek, but Chinese, Cambodian, Vietnamese. There is a recognition of all of our people, new and old, and we have historically been very, very good at dealing with diversity and respecting diversity and understanding that is an important part of the Canadian characteristic. And in spite of all of our problems I would argue that we have been better than any other country in the world probably, in reconciling those differences, putting them together, respecting them, yet finding a common good at the same time.

So we have had, as I said, probably the most discussed, worked over, analyzed little piece of paper, Meech Lake, in the

history of this country. Quite different than 1982. In 1982 this did not go to Provincial Legislatures as you recall, it did not have Provincial hearing. Then it had to go to the Mother of all Parliaments, the Parliament in Westminster in order to patriate our Constitution. So in many respects a far, far more significant piece of paper, the Patriation and Charter of Rights in 1982 had far less attention and far fewer discussions than did this Meech Lake discussion we are having at the present time.

I want to, if I may, take the time, Mr. Speaker, to address some of the issues that have been raised, and I heard part of the Attorney General's speech as I was sitting in the Speaker's Office waiting to come and share my thoughts with you. And the question is: What is a Distinct Society? Does it give some special status? Are Quebecers different than us? Do they have more rights or less rights or fewer privileges? What does it really mean for us today? What does it mean for someone working in a gas station in St. John's or in a mine in Sault Ste. Marie? What does that really mean?

Let me back up a little bit before I come to that. Our Constitution in 1867, the BNA Act, is a very interesting document. It is not filled with the heroic language of the Constitution of the United States, and there is no, 'We, the people' kind of clause to summon everybody around common principles. It is in rather sparse prose, Balzacian prose, if you like. It defines not only our governing institutions and the distribution of power, but it also recognizes the differences. It was created by people with

dramatically different views of our federation. John A. Macdonald wanted a unitary state, a very strong Federalist. Cartier had a totally different view, a totally different view, wanted a strong Federalism to protect the rights of Quebecers. Again they were almost like Stirling Lyon and Pierre Trudeau in terms of their differences of opinion, but they were able to put them together in 1867 and it was an heroic act of statesmanship, irreconcilable views penned together again. And what I would argue is more important than the Governing institutions that were created in 1867, was that that document is a monument to toleration and to respect and to minority. Here you have a completely different province of Quebec with a unique legal system.

In 1774 in the Quebec Act it was granted its distinct status, at that point. They still have a different legal system than the rest of Canada. They obviously spoke a different language, the majority had a different religion, they had a different school system. And the Catholics and Protestants in upper Canada were worried about their particular school systems, run as they were by the Churches in those days, all of these differences were accommodated and given constitutional protection in 1867. And what it really said is, look, I can have my religion and you can have yours. You can educate your kid the way you want to educate him and I will educate mine. You can have your legal system and I will have mine, and we can all put it together underneath the umbrella of Canada. That is what they said to each other. And it is my view, because of the toleration and

understanding shown at that time, we created the underpinnings, the intellectual and emotional underpinnings for the most tolerant society in the world today. And now we have an advanced multi-cultural society which allows us, based on those principals, to bring in people from lands from all corners of this globe and make them feel comfortable and wanted here, and full and true Canadians. I think that is the most important achievement in 1867. And along the way accommodations were made. When BC came in there were special provisions to build a railroad; part of the constitutional provisions. Special language provisions for Manitoba in 1870. And when Newfoundland came in in 1949 there were special provisions for the protection of the parochial school system here, special provisions with respect to the sale and distribution of margarine. Now putting margarine in a constitution is not exactly the most heroic thing I have ever heard of, but it was a recognition of a reality here, and people were not so fixed in their mind that they could not adjust to a reality, and so they fixed it. And frankly, who gives a damn? It was a reasonable accommodation to a reality of the situation. Heroic, maybe no, but it sure was sensible and has stood up to the test of history.

So we have gone on to that, to the question of, well, what this distinct society means. How do we put all of this together in the context of our constitutional history of the past? I will just give you a little quote from Sir John A. - an Anecdote of Life of Sir John A. Macdonald and he was talking about Confederation at the time. He said, 'Certainly

Confederation was the product of politicians of all stripes from five colonies.' And certainly the idea did not originate with Macdonald. To Brown's original concept were added the financial expertise of A.T. Galt and Cartier's insistence on minimum essential guarantees of provincial rights. There was no pride of authorship, they all shared in the authorship of a document that is the underpinnings of our great country.

So the question now becomes, well, is the distinct society clause out of character with that? Does it give special powers, special status to Quebec? Does it give them things that Newfoundlanders or Ontarians do not have? Is it out of character with the kind of decisions that we have made historically to accommodate new provinces coming into Confederation? We solicited legal opinions on this, because frankly it was a question that worried us, of Meech and the Langevin discussions. I have an opinion, and I recognize that lawyers - you get three lawyers in the room, you get three different opinions. And I am sure the Premier will tell you if you had 100 lawyers in the room as we did, you would get 100 different opinions as well.

But I quote only from Peter Hogg QC. I think Peter Hogg is probably recognized as the leading constitutional lawyer in Canada today, the most quoted in the Supreme Court. And he was asked his legal opinion. Does the Meech Lake Accord confer special status on Quebec? Something everybody wants to know. I will table, Mr. Speaker, this opinion with you if it would be helpful in your deliberations, but, he said, in opening his opinions, he said it's

important to notice that the constitution of Canada does not treat all provinces equally, and as a result there are now minor differences in the constitutional status of each province, including differences in each province's power. That is what I said in my brief exposition of our Canadian Constitutional history. But let me quote to you his conclusion, he says, 'since there is general agreement that the Constitution does not now confer special status on any province, despite minor variations in their powers, it follows that the distinct society clause does not confer special status on the province of Quebec'. I recognize there are other opinions on this question, but I think I can say with candor that the majority of constitutional lawyers in this country share that view. It was also part of a document tabled with the new agreement that was signed a week or so ago, signed by a number of leading constitutional lawyers, and I commend this opinion to you. Its weight in court will be a subject of some discussion although, as you know, in the last ten years particularly, the Supreme Court has taken into account a variety of different views in a variety of different cases. I just leave with you, for example, in the famous referendum on wage and price controls, one of the documents quoted, indeed in the judgement and in the argument, was a speech from the then Governor of the Bank of Canada to a service club in Saskatchewan with respect to anti-inflation policy, so I believe it will have weight. This document says the following, and I will not read the whole thing - the rights and freedoms guaranteed thereunder are not infringed, or denied, by the application of the

clause. They are not denied by the application of the clause, and continue to be guaranteed subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstratively justified in a free and democratic society. That is the opinion of the experts. Now nothing in that clause creates new legislative authority for Parliament or any of the Provincial Legislatures, or derogates from any of their legislative authority. It may be considered in determining whether a particular law fits within the legislative authority of Parliament or any of the Legislatures. Those opinions are a matter of record and I am sure you will take them into consideration.

I am confident, and I am one of those who had worries about this issue, that we are not creating a special legislative status for Quebec, or giving special powers in those circumstances. In fact the distinct society, by definition, describes Quebec as a majority of French speaking Canadians and a minority of English speaking Canadians. In other words it does give the minority now, for the first time, constitutional status in Quebec, and I think one could even make the argument it gives the minority more power. But let us just say for a moment I am wrong. Supposing my opinion is wrong, and some lawyer somewhere argues, well, yes, but maybe some day on the margins, out twenty, thirty, or fifty years, some judge interprets it differently than I do, and says there is a little special power inherent in the distinct society clause. I do not believe that will be the case, based on legal opinion, but if it does, if that is the case, it

would not affect one Newfoundlander's rights, or one Ontarian's rights. It would only affect rights, if it were operable, in the province of Quebec, and Quebecers want Meech Lake. When you think about it, here we are, non-Quebecers, all of us, passing judgement on them. Do we have the right to tell them that they cannot have something that they want and that they think is important to their cultural identity, to developing their constitutional future. Even at the margin, and I do not believe there is any risk, should we hold up this document because of an outside infinitesimal remote possibility that somebody's rights in a Province that we do not live in, that wants this document, we do not think they should have it. That is a question that has to be addressed by all Canadians. That question was, I think, along with the Senate question, the major subject of discussion during the last week in Ottawa.

The second question to be dealt with in great depth was a question of the Senate. It was not the intention of the original authors of Meech Lake to try to solve the question of Senate reform. Even though it was high on the agenda of the western provinces at that time, particularly Alberta led by Premier Getty. He was insistent at that point on the unanimous veto. Interestingly enough, there have been lots of discussion on that question, but the chief author and the chief architect and the chief proponent of Senate reform was in favour of the unanimous veto.

I think it is important to note, because most people I think who have not read Meech carefully, think that the unanimous veto

applies to everything in the constitution. That is not correct. It just applies to Section 41, to institutional change on the Senate, on Parliament, the Supreme Court and new provinces. The general amending formula still stands, of seven provinces with 50 per cent of the population.

Your Premier, who I respect enormously, has very strong views about Senate reform, and feels that perhaps Meech Lake - not perhaps, and I am very, very careful because I would never want to speak for another Premier - said this could jeopardize the prospects for Senate reform in the future. There is no question through his eloquence and his great knowledge and passion on the subject that he has dramatically advanced the agenda on Senate reform. It is something I would support, because I believe that we have to continue to build our institutions in this country, to give real voice to all Canadians, to make sure that every Canadian feels they are participating in building this country.

I understand, coming from central Canada, some of those cries from the less populous regions, and I want every single Canadian to feel that they have not only a right but a responsibility to participate in the governing of their country. I believe that Senate reform is one of the ways to do that. The question is have we advanced the cause or have we set it back? I think probably at this point the Premier and I have different views. We agreed in the last go-around that we would immediately set up a commission of equal representatives from all provinces to look at the question of Senate reform along certain

defined principles, elected Senate, better representation from the less populous regions, and an effective Senate without interfering with the powers of the House of Commons. Should that not take place over the next five years, we have agreed, Ontario, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia as well, to a redistribution of Senate seats to assist the less populous regions, the west and Newfoundland particularly, in having a greater say at the center.

At the very worst, if we cannot get Senate reform in the next five years, and I believe that we can because I believe there is a great deal of momentum when we have all agreed it is the priority, at the very worst there will be guaranteed, as Ron Watts says, partial Senate reform.

It does not conform with everybody's views on the matter, just as nothing else we did does, but I would argue it is a major step forward. We have set the course. If we were forced to deal with that issue today, and we would not be capable of doing that because Quebec is not at the table, then it would probably stalemate itself and we would see any momentum, any advances, come to a grinding halt. So I would argue that the process has been served and we are making progress.

There were many other improvements that were agreed upon in the last week or so, as many of you know, and they were the result of very wide hearings across this country, in many different provinces and a great deal of discussion. We have improved the sexual equality provisions, we have improved the provisions with respect to appointments from the Territories, and we have agreed on a process to

try to develop that Canada Clause which was very important to Manitoba. And I understand that, and I would like to see a Canada Clause. We don't have a Canada Clause but, let us be frank, it has bedevilled Legislatures for the past 123 years. It is not an easy question; the philosophy is easy, the specifics are difficult.

There are a number of suggestions on the table from a number of provinces, but we are now going to deal with that question and try to put into our Constitution the basic and fundamental characteristics.

Someone said during the discussion that the fundamental characteristic of Canada is constant Constitutional change. It might be the one thing on which we all agree. But we have also, I think, all agreed collectively that we have to address the question of aboriginal self-government. I participated in a conference on aboriginal self-government in 1987. We were dealing with an enormously complex set of issues. We then had nine provinces at the table. Quebec was not there. Quebec historically has been enormously sympathetic to the questions of our first peoples, and has been very progressive in a number of regards. But we had five out of nine provinces at that time. The provinces which turned down the proposals on the table were the three western provinces and Newfoundland. But there have been changes in Newfoundland, as well, and it may be with a new and fresh approach, and with Quebec at the table and a guaranteed constitutional conference, then we can make progress in that regard as well. We have not changed the amending formula with respect to

aboriginal self-government, and I am one of those who believes that major progress has been made in that regard.

We have agreed, as I said, all of us, that the process was not adequate. None of us enjoyed the way it developed, even though we got to know each other extraordinarily well in that week, and there were some enormously heroic moments and emotional moments. And I consider it to be one of the most interesting and deeply rewarding experiences of my life, because I saw acts of statesmanship and generosity that I wish all Canadians could have seen. But we know we have to change that. We know we have to develop the Constitution in partnership with the people, and not many of us have many ideas on how to do that. That is a subject we will be discussing, and I think we can make improvements.

But lest we be too hard on ourselves in that regard, let me say that it was not a process we invented; we inherited it in 1982, we were working to a deadline that none of us liked, and I think in the future it can be more relaxed and far more pre-discussions going on. But, it is also fair to say, like any other big discussion in this country, there will not always be unanimity on these questions. There are many, many people who looked at this whole Meech Lake discussion and said, 'Ah, if just those horrible politicians could just get out of this, we, the people, could sit down and solve all these problems'. So you remember the media would gather them up, they would all go away and sit in a lodge for a weekend and they would solve all the problems, and at the end of the weekend they were all

fighting.

You see, we are elected. We do have a democratic responsibility and an obligation to make decisions, as difficult as they are, from time to time, and all of us are used to taking the consequences of that, be they good or be they bad, and we all recognize whatever we do, there will be the critics, as there should be in a free and democratic society.

The question then becomes, and I heard the Attorney General speak about this this morning, what will happen if Meech fails? The so-called fearmongers, the scaremongers, are we being threatened or cajoled into signing this bitter pill? And what are our responsibilities to the nation? And is Quebec always going to be demanding something? Is this just the beginning of separation? Are they going to go anyway, with or without Meech Lake? And what about the nationalists in Quebec? And maybe they are headed that way anyway, and there is nothing you and I can do to salvage that situation. It is part of the debate. And the answer to the question is, I do not know the answer. And nobody knows for sure. I cannot predict the next hundred years.

I believe the Meech Lake Accord will give us a period of stability in which we can work out other problems. But we all recognize that Quebec only has two major parties, one is a Federalist Party and one is a Separatist Party whose ambitions and aims are very clear, and we all remember the referendum of 1980. And do you know what the score was? It was sixty-fourty. And if you take the Anglophones out, it was

fifty-fifty amongst the Francophones. So make your own judgment about whether this is important in Quebec or not.

And the other question asked was will this keep Quebec quiet for a while? Will they stop demanding all these things? Well, the answer to that is probably no. Because that is the nature of our federation. Will grain payments out west stop the farmers for asking for more? No. Will support for the fisheries here help fishermen to stop asking for more? No. Will help for Ontario get me to stop asking for more? The answer is no. That is the nature of our federation. Everybody is a demandeur. And what is the matter with that? And sure they will ask for more, and Newfoundland will ask for more, and Alberta will ask for more, and British Columbia will want help with their gas pipeline projects, and Alberta will want help with their upgraders. And what is the matter with that? We have lived with that for 123 years, we will live with it for another 123 years. Just as you have every right to stand up on every occasion and put forward the case of your province, so do I have that right for my Province, as well, and so does the Government of Quebec.

So I believe you have listened to the testimony of many people before the Select Committee. You have heard the Chairman of Burns Fry saying interest rates would go up 2 percentage points, and you know the effect of that if Meech Lake is not signed. You have others saying the country will fall apart. You have read about the pressure that Mr. Bourassa is under from the Separatists. But you also read about the pressure

that Mr. Getty is under, Mr. Devine is under and that I am under, that we are all under. We all recognize this is not the most popular document in the country today, but I do not believe that you can keep a country together on the basis of threats or fear. And if that is your only reason for supporting Meech Lake, do not support it. You support it because it is part of the great and generous tradition of this country of accommodating its regions. There is nothing dramatic or unique or out of character with our constitutional history, either now or in the future.

You see, I do not believe you can keep a country together on the basis of threats. You can keep it together on the basis of love and respect and accommodation and tolerance, the kind of principles which are articulated in our BNA Act of 1867. And you have to recognize, as I said, it is part of our honourable tradition and it is not going to stop with Meech Lake, it is going to continue. And there are going to be a lot more strains on this country. It is not the fact that we have had strains in this country that is unique, because we always have had and we always will have in the future. What makes us unique as Canadians is we have always been able to solve our problems in the past. And, look, read the Confederation debates, read about the discussions over conscription, read about the Statute of Westminster, and all the tough negotiations that have gone on. The issues pale into insignificance in the clear light of history, because of the glory of the thing we have created together.

You know, Frank Scott, in his essay on the Constitution, Aspects of Canadian Law and Politics, said this: 'Changing a Constitution confronts a society with the most important choices, for in the Constitution will be found the philosophical principles and rules which largely determine the relations of the individual and of cultural groups to one another and to the state. If human rights and harmonious relations between cultures are forms of the beautiful, then the state is a work of art that is never finished.'

We are, ladies and gentlemen, in historical terms, a mere adolescent on the world stage. We are only 123 years old. We are wrestling constantly with our own identity, wrestling for new ways to put ourselves together, recognizing there is much unfinished business to complete. Much of it is part of the agenda articulated forcefully and eloquently by your Premier, and I share his views in that regard.

Meech Lake was not a document written by one person. There was the blood of twenty-five million Canadians in that, and eleven Governments. The agreement signed a week ago is the same way. No one person in Canada could have sat down and written that document at the beginning of the discussion. It took a week to evolve, as difficult as that was. And there was part of Clyde Wells in that, there was part of Robert Bourassa in that, part of Grant Devine in it, part of Joe Ghiz in it, and part of David Peterson in it, and I am proud to have participated in that exercise.

There is, as many of you know, a famous painting of our Fathers of

Confederation. It was painted by Robert Harris, and it hangs in many of our legislatures. It has, as some of you know, three large windows in the background, behind the Fathers of Confederation, and those are the windows of the Legislative Assembly in Charlottetown. But behind that, the scene that is drawn in is the harbour as it looks out on Quebec City. And, interestingly enough, in that fictional painting of the Fathers of Confederation, there are two representatives of Newfoundland, Ambrose Shea and F.B.T. Carter, and everybody knows that Newfoundland did not join Confederation for another eighty-two years. But there was something prescient about that, and something very, very Canadian about that portrait that takes the best from across this country and puts it together in the common good, and glorifies those things that we have in common, but celebrates our diversity at the same time.

Lord Acton once said a country can either sacrifice self-government to unity or preserve it through federalism. I would argue that this country is too large and too diverse to govern without recognizing some of those differences, the uniqueness of Newfoundland, the uniqueness of Ontario, the uniqueness of British Columbia, and put it all together.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me just offer one final note. I know of the intensity of the debate in this Province, I know of your discussions with your constituents in the last several weeks. And I know and you know that the eye of the nation is upon you, and Manitoba, as well. And you are going to make as important a decision as you have made, as I

have said, I believe in your political lives. And you have the power to kill Meech Lake. You have that democratic right, and no one denies you that. I know, as you know, that Meech Lake and these discussions, both from a process side and from substance side, is not the most popular document this country has ever seen. And I know, and you know, of the pressure that has been brought to bear on all of us, some informed, some not so informed, some to the issue and some on other issues that are bedevilling our province and our country at the same time. I also know that public support has gone up and down. It has been a roller coaster ride. If you look at one poll one day and they say they support it, and you listen to somebody else and they do not support it, in this poll and the other. Frankly, I would like to define as a fundamental characteristic of Canada getting rid of pollsters, but that is another story for another day.

I do not believe that any of us in making a decision of this nature can just ride the crest of the moment. No, we cannot be oblivious to public opinion, because that would be arrogant and rude and insensitive. But, at the same time, we cannot be dragged down into the lowest level, either. As Edmund Burke said, our responsibility is to speak our conscience and not just to take the lowest common denominator on every issue. I believe in politics that there are only two real tests. The one test is the test of conscience, which all of you have, and I believe that will be exercised in all of you in the benefits of how you see the interests of this great country. The other test, I think, is the

test of history. How will this judgement bear up to the scrutiny of your kids, and your grandchildren, and your great-grandchildren? Will they say you seized the moment, that you responded to the occasion, that you served the national interest? Or will they say you did not? Because they are going to say, daddy and mommy, you were there. You had a voice.

I thank you for inviting me today. As I said at the beginning, I know it is an historic occasion. This certainly is for me, and I consider it, personally, to be a rare privilege to address such a distinguished group.

I will leave you with one quotation from Norman Angell in June 1913. He said, 'God has made Canada one of those nations which cannot be conquered, and cannot be destroyed except by itself.' I know of your generosity, I know of your love for your country, and may God grant you wisdom in your deliberations.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, if I might just have one more moment to express the deep gratitude of the entire House to Premier Peterson for doing us the great honor of addressing us this morning, and to also express to him our gratitude for the sincerity with which he shared his views and his opinions with us. Though our opinions on some points may differ, we greatly respect those you have expressed and that is why we were so anxious to have you express them to all of us. I am sure I speak for the entire House when I say we are

deeply in your debt, and thank you very much for doing us the great honour.

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

Mr. Simms: Mr. Speaker, I think I would be remiss if I did not take the opportunity, certainly on behalf of the Opposition caucus, to express similar sentiments to the Premier of Ontario.

I must say, for one of the very few times in this Legislature, I believe everybody listened intently. I did not detect any interruptions or heckling or anything of that nature, and that was, in itself, a major accomplishment here this morning.

Premier Peterson: (Inaudible).

Mr. Simms: And yours too. I have sat in your Legislature, as well. I do want you to know that we were certainly very, very impressed with the presentation, and I have no doubt that it will help all of us, individually, in making that final and crucial decision that we will have to make. We wish you Godspeed.

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

Orders of the Day

Mr. Baker: Motion 3, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Motion 3.

The hon. the Member for Humber East.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Verge: Thank you, Mr.

Speaker. The address we just heard, by the Premier of Ontario, was one of the greatest political speeches I have ever heard. I endorse the sentiments of appreciation made by the Premier and the Opposition House Leader.

Premier Peterson shared with us, in a most eloquent and moving way, his considerable knowledge about the history of Canada, about our constitutional development and, also, his wisdom about the present political reality.

Let me begin my remarks in this crucial debate by saying simply I wholeheartedly support the motion before us, calling for our Legislature to ratify the Meech Lake Accord. I do so gladly, because I believe sincerely the constitutional changes embodied in the Meech Lake Accord are good for Newfoundland and Labrador, beneficial for Canada as a whole, and necessary to make Canada whole. For those positive reasons, I intend to vote yes. I am also mindful of the negative consequences for Canada if our Legislature fails to ratify the Accord, and by virtue of that failure, the Accord dies. Nowhere in Canada would those consequences be worse than here. My decision has been made freely, not according to Party discipline, but according to my conscience.

A free vote is an unusual event in parliamentary democracy. This is only the second free vote in my eleven years in this House of Assembly; the first was the vote on the flag for the Province. There has been considerable debate about how members should be guided in voting on this issue. The Minister of Justice expressed one point of view here this morning, the Premier of Ontario expressed

another.

The Minister of Justice suggested that members should be guided strictly and solely by views given by constituents, however expressed in the last few days. He cited two great Presidents of the United States.

The Premier of Ontario, drawing on the traditions of the British Parliamentary system, which our Legislature embodies, expressed the view that we should draw on the views of our constituents, but ultimately use our own intelligence and our own judgement.

The great 18th century British political philosopher, Burke, said in his classic speech to the electors of Bristol, 'your representative owes you not his or her industry only, but his or her judgement, and he or she betrays instead of serving you if he or she sacrifices it to your opinion.' I endorse that. I believe each of us certainly have the responsibility to incorporate into our final judgement the advice of our constituents, advice given over a period of time not just in the past few days. We also have a responsibility to take and learn from statements of others in our own Province, political leaders elsewhere in Canada, commentators, constitutional lawyers, we have to integrate all the information at our disposal and ultimately apply our own intelligence.

It has been suggested that the vote on this motion on the matter of amending our constitution is of greater significance than an ordinary vote on a simple legislative measure of the Province. For that reason I believe it is even more important

that each of us vote according to our own conscience. The Premier has suggested that we have to be guided by our heads and our hearts. He has indicated that there may be a conflict between the head and the heart and that may be true for some Members in this assembly. In my own case there is no such conflict. I will vote yes for the Meech Lake Accord with both my heart and my head. I support the Meech Lake Accord both on its merits and on the implications for Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada, should it fail to be ratified.

Why do I believe the Meech Lake Accord is good? I am an elected representative for Humber East, a constituency in western Newfoundland. What in the Meech Lake Accord is good for the people I represent and the other citizens of our Province? First of all the Accord guarantees our Province, through our Premier, a key role in future constitutional developments, and that is not to be taken for granted. As premier Peterson reminded us, when Prime Minister Trudeau lead the effort to patriate the constitution in the early 80's and to add the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, initially he did not include the provinces in the discussions. It was only after a reference to the Supreme Court of Canada and a court judgement urging consultation with the Provinces that the Premiers were brought into the discussions. The Meech Lake Accord goes on to include on a short list of agenda items for annual first Minister's conferences on the constitution, roles and responsibilities in relation to the fishery, our most important industry.

As matters stand now our Province

has no legal power whatsoever over the management of our fish stocks and the harvesting of fish. We do not have any jurisdiction over the fishery until fish are landed. Right now we are facing the worst fishery crisis in our history, a crisis that has stemmed from mismanagement of the stocks. Surely it would be better for our people if our Provincial Government could gain some influence over the future management of the fish stocks. Through the Meech Lake Accord we will have an opportunity to negotiate shared management over fish harvesting, over our most important industry.

Secondly, the Meech Lake Accord constitutionalizes or formalizes the practice of the Federal Government cost sharing and spending Federal revenue on programs within Provincial jurisdiction, programs such as health. The Accord goes on to say 'The Federal Government must compensate any province which decides to opt out of any new national cost shared program, contributed to by the Federal Government, falling solely within Provincial jurisdiction, providing the opting out province carries on a program compatible with the national objectives. The key phrases, the key words are 'new' and 'within Provincial jurisdiction.'

A commonly sighted prospect is a new national cost shared day care program, something urgently needed in our Province where we have the least publicly supported day care accommodation of any province of Canada. It seems to me that it would be imminently desirable for our Province to have the choice of either having a new national day care program designed and

delivered by the Federal Government or of receiving compensation and tailoring and delivering our own program that is compatible with national objectives.

Our Province has a bigger rural component than any other province in the nation. Typically Federal programs created by public servants in Ottawa are designed for urban centres. They may be suitable for St. John's, but usually they do not fit very well small communities scattered along our coastline. Therefore, it's good for our Province to have the choice of designing and delivering our own.

Another example is children's education - primary, elementary, and high school education. As some Members opposite who have been involved in education including the present Minister of Education appreciate, our Province's current spending on children's education lags behind the national average, correspondingly our output, as measured by tests, is somewhat below the national average.

For our Province to come up to the national average it is estimated we would have to increase our annual spending by \$200 million. The Minister of Finance would be the first to say that under present circumstances that is impossible. The only realistic way for us to close the gap is for the Federal Government to participate in funding children's education. So far that has not been possible because of the reluctance of some provinces, ours included, to have the Federal Government encroach on such a sensitive area that is so close to citizens where they live, as

education. The Meech Lake Accord provision allowing for the opting out and for provincial individuality in designing and delivering programs providing they are compatible with national objectives, I think, gives us a real opportunity to gain Federal cost sharing of education for our children.

Third, the Meech Lake Accord provides for nominations by provinces to the Supreme Court of Canada. The Accord formalizes the present composition of the court, but provides for the first time, that provinces may recommend candidates for appointment to the Supreme Court of Canada.

The Supreme Court is the final arbiter of disputes between provinces and the Federal Government over powers. Powers over the fishery, powers over offshore mineral rights. It's in our best interest for provinces to help shape the future composition of that highest court of our land. So, these are three provisions of the Meech Lake Accord, I believe benefit our Province.

The crucial provision of the Accord which has generated debate, is, the distinct society section, the clause that says that Quebec is a distinct society. Premier Peterson, has acknowledged the differing points of view about the meaning of that clause. He has stated that leading constitutional lawyers and in his opinion, the majority of constitutional lawyers have given the opinion that, that clause does not give Quebec any extra power. It certainly doesn't give Quebec any power at our expense. It is a clear statement that nothing in it takes away from the power of any provincial

Government or Legislature or takes away power from the Federal Government or Parliament.

How do I approach formalizing in our Constitution, a statement of Quebec's distinct society and an affirmation of Quebec's right to preserve and promote its distinct identity? I am a woman, conscious of age old discrimination against my sex. I am a Newfoundlander, sensitive to put-downs of others, offended by racist Newfie jokes. Perhaps, because I am part of those two groups: I am a woman, I am a Newfoundlander, I readily understand and accept Quebec's need to have its distinct identity stated in Canada's Constitution and I agree with the confirmation of Quebec's ability to preserve and promote its distinct identity.

As I said before, that constitutional recognition doesn't take anything away from us. It doesn't cost us. All it requires of us is, that we open our hearts, that we open our minds to Quebec. In summary those are the main positive reasons for my whole-hearted support of the Meech Lake Accord.

We have to deal with the practical consequences of either ratification of the Accord or rejection of the Accord by our Legislature, which will kill Meech. Realistically, nobody knows for sure what will happen if Meech dies. Almost certainly there will be political upheaval and economic instability. We have had two early warning signs that happened when Lucien Bouchard resigned from the Federal Cabinet. The financial community reacted swiftly. Interest rates went up, the dollar fell. If Meech is passed, all our problems won't be solved, far from it, but

we will have Quebec at the constitutional table and therefore all provinces will be able to participate in the way outlined in the unanimous agreement reached in Ottawa after the week long deliberations, at tackling other constitutional issues that citizens require consideration of at this time.

Approval of Meech will allow future constitutional development in an orderly way. It will also permit political leaders to spend time and energy addressing other problems. Here, in our Province, we have a horrendous unemployment problem. In the area of the Province I represent, according to the latest federal statistics, there is an official unemployment rate of over 20 per cent, and that is at a time of the year when people are usually being taken into the workplace in greater numbers. We have an unemployment problem of over 20 per cent in Western Newfoundland now. I have talked about the fishery crisis and that is one of the main contributors to the rising unemployment rate. These are issues that need the urgent attention of the Premier and the Cabinet, and of all the elected Members of this House of Assembly. We will not be doing justice to our people if we continue to be consumed and absorbed by constitutional wrangling, and I am afraid that is what will result if the Meech Lake Accord fails Saturday midnight, which is the deadline.

I have talked about the significance of public opinion. I acknowledge that there is wisdom in the crowd. I feel a great responsibility to the electors who put me here. I feel throughout my whole career as the MHA for Humber

East I have been available to the people who live there. That is my home. I spend more time there than I do here. When the House of Assembly is in session, of course, I have to be here. Throughout a period of years, especially the last few months, quite a few people in the District have discussed constitutional issues with me. Interest began to be heightened a few months ago when our Legislature considered reversing our previous support for the Meech Lake Accord. Interest reached an all time high in the last week or so. I have heard from more constituents on this issue than any issue other than amalgamation. In the case of amalgamation the representations came from the community under the gun so to speak. In terms of the District as a whole, I have heard from more people about the Meech Lake Accord and the Constitution than I have on any other single issue in my career as a politician. Some people initiated contact with me, quite a few actually, in the last week. In other cases I made the first overture. I contacted constituents at random and when I had contact with people about other concerns, or problems, I asked the first question about the Meech Lake Accord, so I have received opinion in two ways. I have to tell you that a definite majority of the citizens of Humber East that I have heard from, now want the Accord to be ratified. There is a significant minority who are against ratification.

A common concern, and one that I myself share, has to do with the process. It seems to me, and Premier Peterson, who has been more intimately involved explained this, that there has been a significant change in public

attitude about the Constitution over the eight years since our Constitution was patriated. Prior to, and up to that time, most citizens seemed content to leave decisions about the Constitution to political leaders, and political leaders proceeded in a rather elitist way to make decisions. If you recall, at the conclusion of the 1981-82 deliberations about the contents of the patriated Constitution with the Charter, a final agreement was struck among three politicians in a kitchen. Those politicians were heralded, nobody complained about three men in the backroom making a deal and shutting out the public.

With the coming into force of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, of course, our Constitution has assumed a much greater importance in the lives of individuals. Interest groups led the way in insisting on public involvement and participation. It seems to me however that political leaders were too slow to grasp the shift in public attitude. Unfortunately neither the Federal Government nor the Provincial Government conducted a comprehensive information or education campaign, and that more than anything else is resented by my constituents. Here just a few days before the deadline, just a few days before I have to vote on whether or not we should ratify the Meech Lake Accord, they still lacked basic information about it. That was not their fault. To get even the Accord itself, a person in Humber East would have had to search. Many people with whom I spoke told me the first time they had seen the Accord and had a chance to read it for themselves, was when they saw my newspaper advertisement on Saturday. I set out the full text of the Accord

and the Add-ons Agreement reached by the First Ministers in Ottawa. People are upset about the process, and I share their uneasiness. I hope we have all learned a lesson through this experience, and in future will inform and involve the public in a meaningful way in our deliberations about constitutional reform.

I would like to say near the end of my speech that my support for the Meech Lake Accord is not an indication of my satisfaction with the economic and social reality of our Province. I've mentioned some of our problems: our staggering unemployment rate; our fish stock prices that has resulted from mismanagement of the stock; the Upper Churchill power contract which leads to an unconscionably small return to the citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador for our resource; our being put down and belittled by people who repeat racist Newfie jokes. I am not happy with our status, but I believe ratifying the Meech Lake Accord will be a step in the right direction for us. I feel the fact that it enhances the powers of the Provincial Government is healthy. I believe the chance it gives us to gain influence over our fishery is necessary for economic improvement.

The fact that I am supporting the Meech Lake Accord does not mean that I am not going to complain about Federal Government policies and actions. It does not mean that I am not going to complain about Provincial Government policies and actions. I am not happy with our current position. But I believe the best way in terms of constitutional development to further our status and our well-being, is to ratify

the Meech Lake Accord.

In conclusion, drawing on my head and my heart, I believe ratifying the Meech Lake Accord will preserve the unity of Canada. It will advance the interest of Newfoundland within Canada. And the Accord will achieve what can be achieved today, and make possible what more can and should be achieved tomorrow.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Grimes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I must say, it is legitimate this time. I know I say it many times when I rise in this House, but it is indeed a pleasure to have the opportunity to rise and participate in this debate. And I think that this time, even though we use the phrase many times on other occasions, that it might be appropriate to say and describe this debate as having historic proportion and consequence, mainly because of the way it has been framed by the Prime Minister of the country and other provincial leaders, and they want us to believe that. But I believe there is some substance to that, and history will show that this debate in Canada, regardless of the outcome, will have been significant in Canadian constitutional development.

I would beg, just for a minute, to digress and refer to a couple of comments made by the previous speaker, the hon. Member for Humber East, before I go into my own comments, one being that unless there is some kind of a

small conclave on the west coast of this Province that is different from anything I have seen anywhere else, having received calls from all over the Province, that I would suggest it would be very difficult for someone to produce evidence that a group of people are actually in a majority position asking Newfoundland legislators to approve this Accord. However, I have to, as I always do, accept the word of the member in the House. Now, I am not questioning it, I am just saying that I have some difficulty myself, from my own experience, but the member, of course, knows her region of the Province much better.

Secondly, there was some reference to information about Meech Lake and the fact that for the first time on the weekend past, a member in this House had to pay to provide information about Meech Lake to the constituents. That was done, as I understand it, in all papers in the Province and paid for by the Government, unless someone chose not to avail of that. But I have to comment that I find it very, very strange indeed that a member who was a Cabinet Minister in the previous Administration, who stood in this House and voted for the approval, would, indeed, now talk about information, when there was absolutely none provided in 1987 or 1988 when it was previously passed. And I do apologize for those comments, but I felt they had to be placed on the record of the Newfoundland Legislature so that we can now continue with our comments about the remainder of the debate.

The purpose of the whole process engaged in, beginning in 1986-87, that became known as the Meech

Lake Accord, was stated along lines of saying that it was to promote and enhance Canadian unity. And I am sad to say that in my estimation, regardless of what happens in the next couple of days, I think that objective is doomed to failure, and mainly because of the approach that has been taken to the whole evolution of constitutional debate in the last two or three years, much moreso than any differences people have with content. So there are significant differences in terms of the content being debated, but I think the approach taken has caused a rift and has caused a widening of certain gaps that may exist, and has led to enhance and promote some tensions that have normally existed in the country, rather than to cause them to abate in any way, shape or form.

So the vote in the end, in trying to achieve that very laudable objective, I think may be inconsequential, that I do not believe there is anything about this process now, and I do not believe there is anything that can happen by June 23rd, that will in any way see history recording the debate surrounding the Meech Lake Accord as an instrument that promoted Canadian unity and talked about enhancing Canadian unity. I think that part is doomed to failure.

The whole debate in the last while has given rise to a tremendous amount of rhetoric, as well, and I was relieved that the week or so that I had in my constituency served two purposes. Not only did it give me a chance to elicit input from members and constituents in my riding, but it also gave me a chance to take some time to purge myself of some negative emotions that I had

harboured for awhile because of some of the rhetoric in the debate that I resented and found offensive. And I think that I have worked very hard at trying to remove that as part of the decision I am about to make in a couple of days, because I want that to be removed. I always try, when making difficult decisions, to make sure that they are decisions largely of the head with the emotion removed, because emotion sometimes blinds you to the task at hand.

I was most offended, I think, in the past week, by watching a program on CBC News World, in which there was a panel discussion with just a couple of members and a phone-in program. I do not know the exact wording of the question, but the question that people were asked to comment on was, Do you think it is right and proper that Manitoba and Newfoundland could be holding this thing up, and should have the right to vote to stop Meech Lake? I found that offensive in the whole Canadian context, the context of the Constitution and the Charter, that for some reason, because we are small in number, because we live in a Province at the extremity with only half a million people, and because Manitobans only have a million people, that anyone would question whether or not we have the right to exercise the constitutional matter before us, in fact the constitutional privilege that we are granted in Canada, that because we are small in number someone would even pose a question that maybe we shouldn't be thinking about doing this. I believe quite firmly that every Canadian, no matter where they live, is supposed to have equal rights, every province is supposed to be equal, and that question

should never be asked. The size of the province or its location in the country has no bearing on whether or not the members elected in that legislature to represent their people have the right to express their free view on any matter, up to and including constitutional change, as we are discussing here.

I would like to frame my remarks in the time I have, Mr. Speaker, along the lines of some of the things Premier Peterson put forward in this House, and I think I will do that for one reason only, that I would like to take a few minutes to try to show that it is quite possible for people to look at the exact same set of circumstances, to reason it through, and to arrive at completely different conclusions, which is what I have done. I would like to touch on just a few of them.

I agree fully, and I am very proud of the fact, that here in Newfoundland we are having a free vote and we are giving more than symbolic recognition, but real recognition to the fact that this issue should be and is being raised beyond political partisanship. That is why I do apologize for having to put the record straight at the beginning, because that did smack of political partisanship and that is not the purpose of the debate. But I would like to have it on the record to correct those things which were said.

He indicated clearly that he cares passionately about Canada, as do all of us in this Legislature. And he made two comments, that he feels the Meech Lake Accord if ratified would help make Canada whole, and would help make it

better.

I contend that Canada is whole. There have always been stresses and strains between the provinces and between provinces and the Federal Government, but Canada is whole. You can't make whole what already is. He talked about making it better. I beg, respectfully, to disagree that the directions outlined in the amendments proposed at Meech Lake make Canada a better country. I don't believe that it does. So I do beg, with respect, to disagree that this process and these amendments will make this a better country, because it doesn't fit the vision that I believe many Canadians share with me.

He also indicated that it addresses the notion that there was one omission in 1982 and one compromise. Everybody has his view on the notwithstanding clause, and I won't go into that. In terms of the omission, though, we talk about the lack of Quebec's signature on the Constitution. We all do realize, however, that there were federally elected members who represented the Province of Quebec, who willingly signed the Constitution, and Premier Peterson, himself, indicated that you could not expect the provincially elected leader of a Separatist Government to willingly sign a document promoting Canadian unity. The problem I find with it is that people say that but still suggest that the rest of Canada owes some debt to the Province of Quebec, relating to 1981 and 1982. So I look at the same information and I respectfully come to a different conclusion. I do not believe that there is a debt owed. I believe there was a deliberate decision taken, duly and rightly and

properly so, by the provincial Government in the Province of Quebec at the time, and they bear responsibility for that. Nobody owes them anything or should feel anything about it, other than that they exercised their right at the time and they are accountable for that, not anybody else. I don't buy the argument that there is a debt owed to anybody resulting from the debate in 1981-82.

The problem has always been there. Our very fine speaker, the Premier of Ontario, admits that. I heard every speaker at the Constitutional Conference in Ottawa just a week or so ago, when they concluded, recognize that that is there. It has been a fact of life in Canada. My problem with it is they say, Well, we had better do something about it now, or we have a real crisis in a day or two. My question is, if it has always been there, if these tensions are always there, they have always existed since the foundation of the country as we know it, why is it there is suddenly a crisis if we don't find the answer within two days? That boggles my mind, that all of a sudden the answer is supposed to appear in two days time, or in three years from 1987, when everybody recognizes that we have grappled with it for over a century, and now we are being told that if we do not resolve it in two or three days, the country is at risk; all of a sudden the country is at risk.

The only defence I have heard offered in any meaningful form is that the people were pressured into it; those involved, the First Ministers were pressured into it. And the defence is offered that they had no choice but to do that, because they did not create this

process they inherited it from 1982. I would like to suggest, for the record again and this Assembly, that I believe that one very important point is missed when people of the country stand up and say they object to the process. They are not objecting to the fact that in 1987 in Meech Lake the eleven First Ministers and so on, with the legal opinions at the time, agreed that there should be unanimous consent for the Meech Lake changes. No one objects to that. No one objects to the fact that there was a three year time limit. What is objected to is that in the three years that were available the time was not used wisely to educate the public, which is what I referred to at the beginning. It was not used widely, except in some provinces, to ask for public input, and then when the ministers themselves, the First Ministers got together.

There is no difficulty with the process in terms of the fact that they had a deadline and needed to do something. The process complaint, as I understand it from people I represent, is with the fact that it was done in privacy and secrecy. No matter what deadline you are facing, you do not have to sit closeted in privacy to make your decisions. I understand, Mr. Speaker, as well, that in fact certain parts of the every discussion have to be done privately, and that the First Ministers should, indeed, only be dealing with the basic principles they are going to address, and that the rest of the work should be left for a later session. But, in fact, somebody has to take responsibility for the reality that the whole thing was done privately. And that is the objection that I understand to the process, not the fact that there

was a three year time line, that was manageable and so on, and not the fact that you had to get unanimous consent, although I do now find it passing strange, as well, and strikingly strange, that even though it requires unanimous consent, when one or two provinces decide that they have objections, there is tremendous pressure brought to bear for you to come onside and share the other view, and you are not allowed, on your own, to raise your objection without tremendous pressure from everyone around.

Let us look for a few minutes, if I might, Mr. Speaker, at the issues of the Accord because they need to be addressed. The distinct society has been discussed here this morning, and it has been discussed for some months now and years. I do not disagree with Premier Peterson's assessment of what happened in 1867. As a matter of fact, I agree. However, today, in 1990, what we have been asking for is assurances that there will be no infringement upon the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, nor any special status or legislative authority conferred upon any one Legislature in any one Province over any other. And again I find it strange that the political leaders of the country, in being the Prime Minister and the First Minister in Quebec, when asked is there a conflict, is there any problem? They will publicly state there is no problem. But when asked as part of this process to write something down and sign it, to say that they would ensure that, or assure people of that, they refuse to sign it. I heard a word on T.V. a week or so ago, there was some 'magic'. I do not see any magic in the words of 1987, but for some reason they are

not allowed to be touched. And that has nothing to do with the Constitution or time lines, that has to do with political decisions that political leaders make and they have to be responsible for. So verbally they say it is fine, there is not a problem.

It was suggested and read into the record by Premier Peterson, again, 'that there is a legal opinion which says there is no difficulty.' And he indicated again that it is only an issue in Quebec anyway, they cannot infringe upon any rights anywhere else, and if the people of Quebec are satisfied with that, why should we bother?

I did not solicit this, but mailed to me was a legal opinion with four professors of law, the same professors who teach lawyers across the country, indicating in their conclusion that a distinct society clause with distinctive weight would inject into the fundamental law of Canada, not in the one province, but into the fundamental law of Canada, the principle that a cultural group may promote its interest at the expense of the equal right of all citizens to the fundamental freedoms constitutive of their humanity.

And they conclude, 'given the strong possibility that the Supreme Court will interpret the clause so as to attach more than symbolic value to it. The clause should state explicitly that it confers no powers inconsistent with the Charter.' When it was asked that somebody write something about that in a definitive fashion, the only thing that happened in Ottawa was that an opinion was given contrary to this one signed by six

constitutional lawyers. Here is one signed by four constitutional lawyers, who teach lawyers across the country constitutional law, saying that there is a potential problem and a risk for the fundamental law of Canada. Not rights or anything in one Province, but the fundamental law of the country. I would enter that and table it for the record, if I could, Mr. Speaker, so that others might want to view that and look at it.

Let us look at senate reform for a few minutes. I must admit to being somewhat puzzled myself as to why, as Premier Peterson said, the chief proponent of senate reform, of the equal senate concept, in another province in this country seems willing to go along with the changes that have been secured in the last few weeks. That does puzzle me greatly. We have been asked to judge whether or not the advances made are, in fact, advancements, or if we reject, do we set back the whole process of senate reform? There is talk about a commission that will examine how we might properly reform the senate. I would suggest to you that the commission is a lost cause and a waste of time if we pass the Meech Lake Accord. Because from everything that I have followed deliberately from our friends in the Province of Quebec, every political leader that I have seen speak in that province, on any side and with any party, has always said when they talk about the possibility of moving towards an equal senate, never, never, never, j'amaiz, j'amaiz, j'amaiz. I can only take them at their word, that they have no intention of ever agreeing to an equal senate. And the real substance of senate change has to

be the equal representation. Because I, for one, would go on the record and say that if all we are going to do is elect the current unequal senate, then we could go back to the move I used to take ten or twelve years ago of saying, why do we not abolish it? And I have no apology for saying that. I think if we are not going to reform it properly, then maybe we should talk about having it disappear.

We have talked about redistribution in the agreement reached a little while ago in Ottawa. The question is, is it a positive first step? I cannot see how it can be when you have one of the participants going to have the right to veto any changes and are already on the record as saying they will not do it. The choice is, is it a positive first step or was it done as part of some face-saving tokenism to try to strike a deal or compromise at the last minute? I will not say what I believe it is, you choose, but I believe, for me, it is certainly not the former, but probably the latter.

Other issues, including spending powers, the aboriginal self-government and so on, I will not go into any detail at this time, other than to say I do find it again somewhat strange that these issues cannot be dealt with at this time, that are going to talk about major revisions in the Constitution, but only certain things are allowed on the agenda. I do buy, in part, the argument that you cannot have the full agenda discussed every time and you should do it in segments. But I do reject the whole notion, as I said before, that there should be such a thing as a Quebec round only because we owe something to

Quebec because of 1981-82. So I think if there are legitimate concerns that are held, these tensions are here, we have existed, we have lived with them, and we will live through them if the will is there to do so, and I cannot see why other legitimate concerns cannot be addressed at the same time.

Then Premier Peterson came to the real question, as he phrased it, which I believe is what happened in Ottawa, and what my constituents were saying to me last week was the real question, What if Meech fails? Never mind is it good or bad anymore, we are down to the last minute now and what if it fails? What have we done? What are we about to do? Are there threats in it? Are there demands? Is Quebec leaving anyway? I have said publicly in my meetings when asked, that I do not know. The Premier of Ontario said to us in this Assembly today that he does not know. I do not know if anybody knows. So, unfortunately, we are reduced in this kind of debate to guessing, to making a guess. Will it buy, with passage, a period of stability? I do not know that either. Do I have any problem with the Province of Quebec suggesting they would like to have some changes in the Constitution before they agree to sign it? Not at all. I totally respect the right of any province and any group to stand up for what they would like to achieve. I respect their resolve. I respect their determination. But I would urge all national leaders to promote Canada within Quebec, rather than to suggest to us that we should do something that maybe we are hesitant to do because it might buy a period of stability - only again a guess, it might buy some

stability.

I think the national leadership has instead given credence to the notion that if we do not appease one province at this point in time, they may be gone. Do we want to risk carrying the responsibility forever into history of seeing the nation change as we know it and have known it? I think, again, we should refuse to discuss anything in an air and aura of threat. You have to be able to have an open, frank, honest discussion, and part of the discussion is recognizing that there are differences and sometimes the differences might be irreconcilable.

What we have done so far, for 123 years, is even though those differences have existed, we have lived with them. The suggestion is now that will not happen in three days time. But, again, it is only somebody's guess, and I am not sure that I would guess exactly the same way. So again I conclude differently. People say, let us accept, let us not risk the possibility. I make the other conclusion. I say we have lived with it and we can continue to live with some of the differences. Why not? Canada itself has struggled along for over 100 years. Why can't we struggle for a few more years and continue to debate openly our differences? And when we get to the point where we have, if it requires unanimous consent, let us have genuine unanimous consent instead of consent based on the fact that people feel threatened or scared to really say in public what they believe is right and what they think is the proper vision and version of Canada.

I would suggest that we have

struggled through since 1982, even though the government elected in Quebec did not voluntarily sign the Constitution at the time, even though their federally elected members did. Why can't we struggle through for a few more years and come to a more agreeable and less divisive set of proposals and changes, rather than what we are being faced with at the present time? I would ask that we do it right rather than out of some unfounded feeling of a debt owed to one Province, or the belief that we might be staving of a problem which I believe has been there and will continue to be there. I take exception to the way it is being promoted by the national leader of the day, as a present-day national crisis that must be solved by Friday or Saturday. I think that has been created and put forward with a political agenda and does not reflect the way that the constitutional evolution of our country should be permitted to develop.

I would like to conclude by saying that I am no saint, as people who know me would recognize and would agree quite readily. I have done things that are wrong before. I think when I have done things which are wrong, though, there are two things about it, I either did not know or somebody sort of tricked me or fooled me and they got me to do it. I did not deliberately do it wrong.

I cannot see how I can deliberately vote other than what everything I have seen and studied, and what my conscience dictates to me I should, out of some kind of fear that there might be some very negative impact, starting in a few days time. I intend to put Canada first as

urged by the Prime Minister of the country, as urged by all the First Ministers, including our own Premier. In my vote I will put Canada first, but it will be the Canada I have a right to stand up and propose I believe it should be, and that is a Canada in which there are ten equal provinces, together in a confederation with a strong Federal Government. That is the vision of Canada that I will vote for. I think if I vote to accept the amendments proposed in 1987 at Meech Lake that I will be voting for something that would see the erosion of that, that would see us move away in a completely different direction, and I am not prepared to do that out of threat or fear of consequence.

It is tempting, I must admit. It is tempting, and when I asked the question in my constituency meetings, it is tempting, as all of us would admit, I guess, to sometimes seek solace and comfort in the arms of the majority. Because people described to me in my meeting, how can you people in Newfoundland be so right and everybody else be so wrong because the Prime Minister agrees? We now have nine Premiers in nine provinces who agree, each one of the Federal parties agrees, how come you still think they are wrong?

Because I believe they have, in the great Canadian way of compromise, gone a little bit too far, and I believe they are willing to buy the argument of buying a little bit of present-day stability at the price of selling out the kind of Canada that I think the Constitution should be describing. So on that basis, Mr. Speaker, I would urge all members who share my view to vote to

reject the motion we have before us. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Grand Bank.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Matthews: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I take pleasure, as well, this morning to take part in this very historic debate. I must say at the outset that I was thoroughly impressed with the speech of Premier Peterson this morning as, I am sure, I will be impressed by the speech of Premier McKenna later on today, and maybe other First Ministers who arrive. Because I think the one thing which has come through to me loud and clear on this particular issue, probably not over the last three or four years, but, I guess, within the last two or three weeks, is the sincerity and just how genuine First Ministers who had taken part in the process just a couple of weeks ago, just how sincere they are about this very, very important issue for our country.

And, of course, having been out and about my district, like other members of this Legislature, for the last week or so, since the free vote was announced, a lot of my remarks will pertain to the feeling out and about my own district and area of the Province.

In the beginning, I would like to refer members to an article in the Globe and Mail, as of Saturday, by reporter Kevin Cox which said: 'Meech not an issue in fishing town', referring to the Town of Grand Bank. It then goes on to say that they are more worried about the loss of their fish

plant, not vote on Accord.

There are some very interesting observations in here, that there was a reluctance by some people in the town, whom he met on the wharf and so on, to even discuss the issue. Because when you stand on the wharf, of course, you can look across the harbour and see their fish plant. A lot of people said they had little interest in it, and that the most important issue for them was whether or not their fish plant would operate after the 30th of June.

It goes on to say, "In this Burin Peninsula town where the only major industry - the fish processing plant which employs approximately 400 people - will close indefinitely in two weeks, constitutional concepts appear lost in the fog that surrounds the town's future.

"Fish plant workers lumbering home in rubber boots only mumble to a reporter something about not understanding the Accord and the consequences of Newfoundland's Legislature refusing to ratify it.

"Even those who have followed and supported Liberal Premier Clyde Wells' passionate opposition to the agreement wonder why they couldn't attract the same attention to the declining fishery" - and their fish plant.

"I wish he would pay the same attention to the situation here," said Lenus Bungay, a twenty-nine year old fish plant worker. "We're more concerned about our jobs than anything else here. There are people who worked at that plant for thirty-five or forty years who are going to be let go with nothing." Now that is, I think, part of the feeling

that exists in the District of Grand Bank.

On my rounds I went to Lawn and visited the fish plant there. The concern in Lawn is whether or not the trap fishery will be successful enough this year so that the people will get the fourteen weeks required to get UI, because they do not have anything else to look forward to. In St. Lawrence, there is a similar concern.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I am not saying that there is not concern in the District of Grand Bank about the Meech Lake issue. There certainly is. In every area, in every district, every region, every town of the Province, there is concern about Meech Lake. But there is one thing about Meech Lake that I liked very, very much. I guess coming from a predominantly fishing area of the Province, a district which is outside of the St. Lawrence Fluorspar Mine, all the employment is pretty well directly related to the fishery. That was a provision for roles and responsibilities in the fishery to be discussed in the future. Not immediately, but at least in the future, and I thought that was a major accomplishment for this Province to have the roles and responsibilities on the fishery to be discussed at a later date with the First Ministers on the Constitutional agenda.

And I am somewhat disappointed that that particular provision in the Accord has been lost in this debate over the last twelve, thirteen, fourteen months by the Premier and by his Government. Because I do not think sincerely, and I have said it in this Legislature before, that we would

be experiencing the crisis in our fishery that we are experiencing today if we had more say in the roles, and more say and more input into the management of our most important industry, that being the fishery. So I am a little disappointed with that.

We all know what this particular round of the Constitution was all about. The constitutional discussions that led up to the Meech Lake Accord were primarily to accommodate Quebec who, to that time and to this time, still is not a partner in the Canadian Constitution. That is what those talks were all about, that is what the struggle and the aim and the desire and the objective was, to accomplish that. And I consider that to be another very major positive aspect to the Meech Lake Accord.

I have very grave concerns, and so do many of my constituents, about what will happen if the Meech Lake Accord is rejected. If it falls in Manitoba or if it comes down to the Newfoundland Legislature and a majority of members in this House reject the Accord, what economic implications will that have for Canada? What will it have for Newfoundland and Labrador? And that came through loud and clear. And I would say I talked to approximately 500 people in my district, that is person to person. I mean I met them, shook hands to them, asked them their opinions on the issue. I think I had about nine telephone calls to my home on the issue, but I met about 500 people out and about the district. And one underlying theme they had was, how will it affect us economically? And that is a very real concern.

Before I left home yesterday, I

received a copy of the local newspaper, The Southern Gazette, which had done a poll on the district. I might say that I was surprised with the results of The Southern Gazette poll, surprised in the findings here from what I thought I had detected in my constituents. Because having gone through three elections and shaking hands and trying to determine how people felt about you and about your leader and about your party, a lot of times you sort of develop an assessment or a feeling, based upon what they do not say sometimes; you are trying to get a feeling sometimes from how a person shakes your hand, whether it is a firm grip or it is a limp grip, and a lot of times by what they say.

And my assessment before I saw this paper, I was asked by a CBC reporter when I came back home yesterday to pack my clothes to drive here, now you have been to the district, you have been here and there - they followed me for a couple of days - what do you think the situation is in your district? And I said 'I would have to say my interpretation of what I have seen would be that there is a majority that would be opposed to the Meech Lake Accord.' I don't know how big it would be, but I would say the majority would be opposed.'

But, anyway, they showed me the results which showed me to be wrong, based upon this particular assessment, and I say that because, as Premier Peterson said, they change daily; it depends on who does them and when, and, of course, who they are polling. But surprisingly it said that 52 per cent in my district were in favour of me, their MHA, supporting the Accord, and 40 per cent were

opposed. And they just asked three direct questions: Do you know what the Meech Lake Accord is about? Do you want your MHA to vote for the Accord during the free vote in the Legislature? And if no, is it because Premier Clyde Wells is saying the Accord is not good for Newfoundland and Labrador?

Now there was one thing in the poll that I was not surprised about, Mr. Speaker, and that was that 72 per cent - now that seems a little bit higher than even I would have thought, I would have said about 60 per cent, but the results of this poll say that 72 per cent in the poll said they do not have a good understanding of the Meech Lake Accord. Now that, again, of course, we have been saying for a long time in this House and out and about the Province, that most people do not understand it. And then those who did not understand it had a mixed message for me. They said, 'I do not understand it, Bill. You know more about it than I do. You have been more involved in it, so you vote as you see fit, what you think is best for me and for Newfoundland and Labrador.' And the other side of that mix said, 'I do not understand it, Bill. But I believe Premier Wells is right on this issue, so I encourage you to vote the way he votes.'

So that was the split off in the people who did not understand, who I met with. They relied on me to pass my best judgement, and they are relying on the Premier for what he has exposed of Meech Lake in the debates that have gone on.

Then there were those who were bitterly opposed to the Accord. And I can say to my good friend For St. John's East Extern, behind

me, that he made a remark in this Legislature which he wished he had not made at the time, and he rose to talk about that after. But I can tell you one thing, that the majority of people in my area who are opposed to the Meech Lake Accord, they did not have to tell me they were opposed to the Meech Lake Accord, I knew because of what they said to me, leading up to telling me they were against it. And quite often they started off with a very strong statement, some of it not very diplomatic, I might say, about Quebec and power, more power for Quebec and the concern about the demands of Quebec. And I say that very sincerely and honestly in this Legislature this morning. That is what I found with those who were bitterly opposed for the biggest reason, and I guess that is probably all the way across the country. They are not unique in that or different, but I am just saying it to tell you why they, for the most part, are opposed to it. Those who are for the Accord, coming from a fishery-related, directly dependent area, knew about the fishery provision to be discussed and negotiated in the future, and they were pleased with that. I guess most of the people who are for the Accord, or asked me to ratify the Accord, asked for it out of concern for national unity, or the possibility that if it is not ratified, this country will be fractured or, indeed, break up. There is a grave concern out there by a large number of people about that.

So this is the dilemma I found myself in as I went to the District of Grand Bank, and I am sure members found much the same thing around their own areas. And I think for the first time - no, the second time - in my life, I

was filled with stress, indecision, and sometimes frustration. The only thing I can compare it to was the 1985 election, when, as an incumbent, I offered myself for re-election in the District of Grand Bank. At that time, there were some very serious labour problems in the Province, and it was a rough election. Well, I can honestly say that this issue of Meech Lake is the closest I have come to that feeling again. It is the first time I felt that torn about an issue, and felt that uptight about an issue, and realized that my constituents are so emotionally involved and have strong feelings one way or the other on the issue. So I would like to say to members that I fully appreciate what you have gone through over the last week or so, since the free vote was announced, as you went about your areas of the Province trying to get a feel as to what your constituents want you to do.

Now, I have some other very serious questions, Mr. Speaker, that, I guess, in the final analysis will cause me to vote the way I will. As I drove from Fortune to St. John's yesterday, I had about four hours by myself and I reflected on what has happened in the last three or four years particularly that I have been involved in this Legislature, dealing with the Meech Lake Accord. I voted for it in 1988 to ratify, I voted against the rescinding resolution a few months ago, and I had time alone to reflect on what my constituents had told me, what I knew about Meech Lake, those who asked me to use my judgement, those who told me the Premier was right, those who were more concerned about whether they will have a job in

two or three weeks time or whether they will have enough fish to get them through the summer. So I had time to reflect by myself, I guess, which is the most appropriate time to do that, knowing, of course, that the constitutional change and evolution will not end with Meech Lake, that it will be an ongoing process, as Premier Peterson said this morning. We have been at it since 1867, we will be at it in the year 2067. There will always be provinces and premiers and interest groups out and about the country who will want considerations under the Constitution. It is not going to stop with Meech Lake if we ratify it or if it is rejected.

And the other thing about it, I found out and about that there are a lot of people who do not understand that. They think that Meech Lake will end the constitutional process in Canada, which, of course, is not correct. But I had a chance to reflect, and I asked myself some very serious questions. What happens if Meech Lake is rejected? What will happen to national unity? What will happen to the economy of Canada and, consequently, to the fragile economy of Newfoundland and Labrador? Will a future national Government, in the face of economic crisis, caused by a divided Canada, be able to provide an adequate level of support to provincial Governments and, in particular, to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador? I have a fear about that, Mr. Speaker.

Would the Provincial Government, in the face of economic crisis caused by a divided Canada, be able to maintain its current level of services to the Newfoundland people? I have a grave concern

about that. And I want to say to hon. gentlemen before going any further - and I see some people opposite giving me some strange looks - that I am not raising those points to fearmonger or as scare tactics, they are questions that I have very legitimately developed inside myself because of my concern for this particular issue, and what the implications may be for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in the future. Will a National Government in an unstable or a divided Canada be able or willing to put up sums like those we will need for the development of the Hibernia project, \$2.7 billion in Federal support, \$1.4 billion in grants and \$1.6 billion in loan guarantees? I hope so, but again, I worry about that. Will any private investor, in the face of political instability, put up a sum of money that will be required for projects such as Hibernia? Will we be able to attract the enormous financial resources to further develop our hydro potential in Labrador? - assuming, of course, that development will become possible through a negotiated agreement with Quebec, which we all hope will happen. Will a national Government in an unstable or divided Canada be able or willing to guarantee sums like those that will be needed for development of the Lower Churchill hydro? These are all real concerns to me, and when I was alone and had time to think about them, it is all part of the process that I will go through in the next forty-eight hours or so, to decide what I will finally do when it comes to a vote in this legislature.

Whether our provincial economy goes ahead, stands still, or, quite possibly, falls backward as

we enter the twenty-first century, in my opinion, will depend, in large measure, on whether private investors see stability, uncertainty or division in Canada's future, and I would suggest to all hon. members that that is a very big question. It is a question, Mr. Speaker, that I have tried to come to grips with. No one can answer it. I guess what scares me most is the unknown for the future of this country and this Province. If we pass Meech Lake in its existing form, will we be better off in the future, or worse off? If we reject Meech Lake, will we be better off or worse off in the future? It is a big judgement call on all our parts to try to come to grips with that. If you look at Quebec, if Meech Lake fails, I think it is very, very real that Quebec would leave the country. We will have a different Canada from what we have today, as has already been pointed out in this debate many times over the past year or so, that then, Ontario will have approximately 50 per cent of the population of the country. That will be a whole new arrangement from what we know today. And, of course, that will obviously bring with it problems, as well, for smaller provinces and smaller interest groups around the country.

So, it is a matter, Mr. Speaker, of trying to decide in a very difficult situation, to make a decision based on a lot of unknowns. I would not want to stand in this Legislature and vote for or against something that I thought would have very serious financial implications for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. I would not want to do something that would seriously negatively affect the economy of our Province, whether that be to pass

the Accord as it exists, or to reject it.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard a lot of debate about Senate reform. The Premier has talked about it consistently and he has been a very strong advocate of Senate reform. I would like to go on record once again, Mr. Speaker, saying that I too support Senate reform. Like the Member for Exploits said, if it came to the bottom line and the only thing left to reform them was to abolish the Senate, then I would support that as well.

But it comes down to a degree of reform, what a reform Senate will actually do for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. If we do get an equal and elected Senate, what impact will that have economically on Newfoundland and Labrador? That is the question that I have consistently asked myself and have consistently asked the Premier when I have had an opportunity in this Legislature, because I do not believe that an equal and elected Senate is going to be the salvation, economically, for Newfoundland and Labrador. I support an equal and elected Senate. I have nothing against anyone being elected or I would not be here. I have nothing against it being equal. But I cannot make the connection between an equal and an elected Senate. Whether or not it is effective of course, depends upon the person you ask the question of. Because they are equal and elected does not guarantee they are going to be effective. But I cannot come to grips, understand and comprehend how a Senate that is equal and elected is going to be the salvation in the future to wipe out regional disparity, and to bring us on an even keel with the

rest of Canada. I cannot make the connection as much as I support Senate reform.

Now the Premier believes very, very strongly that will happen if we have a Senate that is elected and equal. He has not convinced me of that and I told him in this Legislature that if he could convince me on that particular issue that I would support it, but I have not been convinced. I believe that if we have a Senate that is equal and elected, that in twenty years time whether Newfoundland is better off economically or worse off, that will not be caused or created by the elected and equal Senate. There will be other factors that will cause that to happen to us. So that is the problem I have with the Premier's demands on Senate reform, while supporting it. I do support Senate reform.

The distinct society clause, Mr. Speaker, has caused a lot of trouble out and about the country. I have never heard anybody yet speaking on this issue say they did not believe that Quebec is distinctive - it is the hang-up about what it does. Well, maybe the Member for Pleasantville does, I see him smiling in his place up there, maybe he has strong feelings on this issue, I do not know. Out and about my District as well any number of people raised that question with me, why should they be any more distinct than we, they would say. We are distinct, too. I would say, yes, we are, we are certainly distinct, but the feeling in Quebec on this distinct issue is far stronger than it is in Newfoundland and Labrador, and for a couple of reasons, I guess.

One being they are French

speaking, predominantly French speaking, and there are approximately seven million of them and there are half a million of us, but who is to say that some day Newfoundlanders and Labradorians may not get more taken up with being recognized as being distinct? That is something, I suppose, for the future. It has caused a fair bit of concern today in Newfoundland and Labrador because of the debate on Meech Lake and the way the Premier has brought out the issue. There is a fair bit of feeling out there about that, but I do not believe that it will give any additional legislative powers, or any other type of power to Quebec. I think all we are going in Meech Lake is recognizing them for what we have known them to be for centuries. That is my belief. That is how I feel about it personally. But there is a concern out and about the Province on that particular issue so I do not have a great deal of hang-up on that.

I think it is most important that we get Quebec to be partners, not only in the Canadian Federation, but in the Canadian Constitution. I think that is the most important thing we can do today, or over the next short while in this country, if we are sincerely concerned about Canada staying together as we know it, if we are concerned about national unity. Someone spoke this morning about fear. I believe it was the Member for Exploits who spoke about fear, the fear of separatism and so on, that there is a fear there, and that fear is sort of being pushed upon us, sort of in a way of blackmail and so on. I just want to say to members that as we have gone through this process, and as we finish up this process within the

next couple of days, I think there is another type of fear that is inside all of us here who are answerable to the electorate. There is a fear that you do not want to go against the wishes of your constituents. The natural thing for a politician to do is go along with the wishes of his constituents if you can adequately determine which way the majority want you to go. That is the most comfortable thing to do. I would suggest that for those in the Legislature that there is that fear as well, that fear of pleasing your constituents on this issue.

For some it is very difficult because I know in some cases the margin of support one way or the other is probably not as great as it is in my own area. The margin of victory in the last election for many was not as large as it was for me in my area of the Province. So that is another type of fear that members have to come to grips with when they - yes, the Minister of Social Services is pointing at himself, he wants me to tell everyone now that he had a big majority and of course we all know he did. So he has probably got a little more flexibility than other members on the issue, and it would be very interesting to observe what the Minister of Social Services does when the vote is called, knowing from what I gathered, his constituency is sort of split on the issue or something he tells me, or he nods across. And knowing the huge majority that he has then maybe we will be surprised when the Minister of Social Services rises in his place to vote. But I just say that because I know that is real, being a politician, knowing the insecurity of the position, that is another fear as we rise in our

places to vote that we will have to deal with.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I want to conclude my remarks by saying it has been a most agonizing process up to the point where the free vote was called, I can honestly tell members that in going about my District the only comments that I heard about Meech Lake is that they would wish it would go away. The two things were: they hoped that some day they would turn on their televisions and not see Meech Lake and the Hughes Inquiry. But once the First Ministers got together in Ottawa a lot of Newfoundlanders watched it intently. They watched it. They stayed up to the wee hours of the morning watching it. They got taken up in it. And once the free vote was announced, of course, we went on round and about our Districts to see how they felt and what they were doing.

So it has become an agonizing issue. A very intense issue. Being in politics for nine years it is one of the most intense situations that I have gone through. I say that very honestly to members. It has been agonizing. People feel so strongly one way or the other, and yet it is left up to us fifty-one now, I suppose, unless it comes to a tie and then, we do not know what Mr. Speaker will do, but it is a rough position to be put in, Mr. Speaker, I say in concluding. And I am going to use my best judgment on what I know about the Accord, take into account what my constituents have told me, look at the poll results in The Southern Gazette.

An Hon. Member: I think it is split.

Mr. Matthews: No, the Burin Peninsula is split. It is not split in my District, you see. When I saw the headline first I almost fainted yesterday, but it gives me a little bit of comfort.

But another very interesting point in this particular poll is that they did fifteen calls, a small number, to Fortune - Hermitage, my friend's District down here. There were five for and five against and five did not understand.

So I do not know what kind of position that hon. gentleman finds himself in, if bigger samples would bring up the same result.

But in concluding, Mr. Speaker, looking at the unknown, trying to determine what the Accord will mean for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, whether ratified or rejected, I will be standing in my place come the vote, to vote in favour of the Meech Lake Accord.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Mines and Energy.

Dr. Gibbons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it being five minutes to one, I would ask the leave of the House to adjourn debate right now so that I can do my full speech at one session instead of in pieces.

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



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(Hansard)

Speaker: Honourable Thomas Lush

Wednesday

[Preliminary Transcript]

20 June 1990

The House resumed at 3:00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Mines and Energy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Dr. Gibbons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is my pleasure to rise in this debate today. I am not going to discuss the details of the Accord. We have heard a lot of details both inside and outside this Legislature over the last few months. I did appreciate the comments of the hon. David Peterson this morning. Mr. Speaker, I stood with this Government a few weeks ago when we rescinded Newfoundland's approval of the Accord, and it has not changed. The new amendments contain some improvements, but do not alter the fundamental features of the Accord itself. The question today is not whether Meech, plus or minus its amendments, is good or bad, the question is whether Meech, as the flawed document that it is, should now be approved and why?

Mr. Speaker, I have tried to approach this question with an open mind. And I repeat I tried to approach this question with an open mind over the last few days. And in that time I have sometimes felt strongly that the Accord should be approved for the sake of Canada, and to welcome Quebec as a signatory.

Other times I have felt equally strongly that it should be rejected and also for the sake of Canada. I have done my best to do an intellectual assessment of the pros and the cons, and I have

consulted widely to help me make up my mind. As a result I have gone through an emotional gut-wrenching catharsis over the last few days like nothing I have ever experienced before in my life. I have ridden a roller coaster of emotion as I struggled with the implications of this decision. It has been like sitting by a bedside and waiting for somebody to die.

I would like to briefly review the process I have gone through over this past several days to try to reach this decision. Number one, like all the others I have received phone calls, numerous phone calls from my constituency, from all throughout the Province and from elsewhere. I remember one that came in on Father's Day, during supper, I was on the phone for an hour listening to a man pour out his thoughts to me, very emotional thoughts. I made phone calls deliberately calling outwards to try to get what I thought might be a more random selection of the views. And I got some good views pro and con on this Accord.

Thirdly, I had a poll done, I took my constituency list, which is on a computer, and at a random selection of numbers had a poll done. I have the results, 50 per cent said reject, 17 per cent said approve, 21 per cent said, Rex, you decide; and 12 per cent said please, carry on with business and get on with Government.

Number four, I have received letters, memos from constituents and others. I am going to quote from a couple of letters later in my presentation. Some of these showed great thought, great knowledge, and sensitivity to the issues.

The fifth thing I did was on Monday night when I went to my constituency for a public meeting. On Monday night I went to St. Theresa's Hall and I talked to the people who wanted to come out there, person to person. And I have to heap praise on one lonely man who said, 'Rex, I think we should approve it.' Because except for three others who said, 'Rex, you make the decision.' All the others said 'Vote no.'

I have also met constituents and others on a personal, one to one basis, in my office, in the street, in the shopping mall, wherever I happen to be, and exchanged views. I appreciate the input that I received from everyone in every way, and I thank them.

What did I find, Mr. Speaker - much divisiveness. Sometimes much emotion; sometimes a great deal of thought, but always a lot of caring for Canada. My family is split on the issue. Some say, Rex approve it. Some say Rex, reject. My friends are split likewise. But most have said Rex, we will stand by you whatever it is. But there are some fairweather friends out there, who said other things. I am sorry to hear. My neighbours are split, they stop me in the street and some would say, you have to approve it now. Others would say, no, never, we cannot approve it. So as I said earlier, likewise my constituents in general, they are split.

My wife's brother, living in Toronto, sent flowers to the Premier. And the message to me was, Rex, stand by the Premier, whatever he wants, stand by the Premier. Because what he is doing is what is right for Canada. A

cousin now living in Northern Ontario, but after about a dozen years in Anglophone Quebec said, Rex I think it should be approved. Another relative living here, married to an Anglophone Quebecer, said Rex we are a hundred and fifty percent behind the Premier, and it should be rejected. Another Anglophone Quebecer that I talked to at dinner on Wednesday night said, Rex I think in the circumstances this is best, and we should take it. You should sign it. A Francophone Quebecer, a friend now living in St. John's, I have known for about a decade, said, reject. I was there in 1980, I lived through the referendum, I think you should reject, Quebec is not going to leave, they will just go through a reassessment. Another friend whose mother's French, said reject, Meech should not be passed or rejected on the basis of what Quebec might do. And on, and on. On and on went the feelings. The mixed feelings. As I said, Mr. Speaker, I consulted widely. I found many of them said, that for economical and financial reasons, approval was best and the lowest risk option right now for the near term for Canada. The status quo will not be disturbed and we will get on with life, and with living and with business. Canada will stay together, and hopefully, in future constitutional rounds the errors of Meech will be corrected. The point was made, this is the common sense thing to do at this time. The corollary of course in this scenario has been that if we do not approve, if we do not approve there will be more economic disruption, and Quebec might separate. Canada could be lost, Newfoundland will be the scapegoat. And Newfoundland will be punished.

And, in saying that, I reflect on what I saw a few minutes ago on Newsworld, when I watched an interview with Sharon Carstairs, and it seems that is exactly what she went through, in reaching her decision. This would be a decision made out of fear. Fear for the future, fear for the country, fear for this Province and fear for the unknown, of what is going to happen after Friday. Others, Mr. Speaker, have made the point that a constitution and a country cannot be built on fear, and we have heard that several times today. A country instead must be built on hope and optimism. I believe that hope and optimism must start with a complete Canada containing Quebec. Many of those I have consulted are convinced that Quebec will not separate. That the people of Quebec, if asked the question, now as in 1980, would choose Canada. I believe that they would choose Canada personally as well.

Canada is one of the most resource rich and best nations on the planet earth. We should appreciate it and get on with it. We are Canada from sea to sea, we must remain Canada from sea to sea, and from the southern border to the pole. At this point Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote from a couple of letters that I received that went into this mix. One from a friend who is supporting Meech Lake. 'I have arrived at my position, having considered all the arguments. My position is based on two premises. Firstly, I am aware, from my own experience as an advocate, that ones opportunity and ability to guide discussions to a desired solution is lost, when the climate degenerates to one which would surely exist if

the Accord is not ratified. Secondly, the risk of rejecting the Accord must be considered. The potential risks are both immediate and far reaching.' That is the person who supports the Accord.

Now another married couple in my District, I received a call, and this is a follow-up letter, 'Mr. Gibbons: As you may recall you received a call from me on Wednesday at your home indicating that my wife and I wish to have you consider our reluctant acceptance of the Accord.

At this time, after much soul searching and consideration of the principles of what the country stands for, we would like to emphatically state that we urge you to reject this much flawed document.' - reflecting what I have gone through myself in the last few days.

'How intelligent a decision can one make when faced with the possibility of economic reprisals, or worse still a reduction in available financial help that this Province so desparately needs. Our choice is indeed a tough one. Nevertheless, my wife and I on careful consideration have come to realize that to cave in would be to compromise the very principles our forefathers risked their lives for. We are prepared to risk the economic ruin of our beautiful Province so that Canada will have a better chance of becoming unified. We are optimistic that in the long-term Canada will evolve into a much stronger nation than it ever was before. Mr. Gibbons we would ultimately like to see our constitution recognize all Canadians equally.

The majority of Canada stands

behind us on our principles. We happen to believe in a much more united Canada as a result of this. The world will eventually acknowledge and reward us for it. Quebec stands to lose much more than ourselves. We love Canada and Newfoundland and for this reason we strongly urge you to vote against the Meech Lake Accord.

We wish both you and Clyde Wells and all MHAs God's strength in making the right decision for this country.'

Right now, Mr. Speaker, at twelve minutes after three, Wednesday, June 20, 1990, I ask, should we make this decision out of fear? Should we make this decision out of hope? Either way we will reap what we sow. I have agonized over this decision for many days. I truly desire to have Quebec become a signatory to this Constitution of ours, but I also believe that the Accord is fundamentally flawed, and could prove detrimental to the future of Canada.

This brings me to decision time, Mr. Speaker, it has not been easy. This decision is bigger than its implications for Rex Gibbons, MHA. This decision is bigger than its implication for Rex Gibbons, politician. As I said earlier, I have leaned towards support and I have also leaned towards rejection. Right now for some of the feelings in me, I wish I could say yes to Quebec, and approve the Accord. But, unfortunately, my feelings and everything I think right now are saying, Rex, you have to say, no to the Meech Lake Accord. I am sorry for that but if nothing changes me in the next three days, that is the way I will be voting.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Simms: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all I want to commend the Minister of Mines and Energy for his passionate description, I guess, that I think aptly applies to what all of us have gone through. For anybody who may be listening to the debates or anybody who may think that any member on either side of the House are simply voting the way they are voting for Party purposes, I think, the Member for St. John's West has shown what a gut-wrenching experience this has been for all of us.

I guess, to put it in perspective, if you look back upon the activities of a week or so ago, when the first ministers were all crowded up their in one room in Ottawa and we saw the premiers particularly our Premier go through the kind of situations they had to go through during that week, I think now all of us as individual MHAs are going through, albeit it on a much smaller scale no doubt, but certainly similar kinds of experiences. And there is no doubt that this particular issue, the issue of the Meech Lake Accord - for me at least, is one of the very few that I can recall, which has created so much anxiety, so much divisiveness, and so much emotion.

I remember very well, being a relatively new member, less than a year, in 1980 when the Newfoundland Legislature debated the great Newfoundland flag. We had a fantastic debate over that Newfoundland flag. Now I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, that

particular debate, for me as one individual member of the Legislature; when I went out to my riding, to try to explain to the people in my riding, and people in other parts of Newfoundland, what this arrow was, and the geometric design of the Newfoundland flag was all about, it was a very difficult thing to describe. Very difficult. And there were some very emotional comments made by people, both pro and con. And I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that the issue of the Meech Lake Accord is in the same category to me. It is very difficult to explain the Meech Lake Accord, for obvious reasons, and we are all aware of them.

The issue itself, Mr. Speaker, has clearly evoked a considerable amount of discussion and emotion, not only here in Newfoundland, of course, but all across our Province. If one were to judge simply by what you hear on open line programs, for example, here in Newfoundland, and listen to all the callers, one would have to say that just about every caller wanted rejection of the Meech Lake Accord. Although, I recall hearing some of the open line hosts over the last couple of weeks saying the mood had shifted a little bit.

Indeed, last week for the first time, whether you believe in polls or not, there was a poll done by the Angus Reid people, I believe it was, which indicated that Newfoundlanders by a slight majority of 46 to 40, I believe were the numbers, wanted it approved. And then we had a poll that was displayed last night, which we all got copies off, commissioned by the Federal Government I think, which indicated 42 per cent were in

favour, and 42 per cent were opposed. And I thought to myself, that is really going to help me. That is really going to help me make a value judgement on where I should stand in this particular debate at this particular time.

Like the Member who spoke before me, the Member for St. John's West, and like all other members, I guess; I really welcome the opportunity, I truly welcome the opportunity and I thank the Premier for taking the decision he did with respect to the free vote, as opposed to a referendum, having seen what I have seen over the last 5 or 6 days, in particular, having gone back to the District and talked to other people outside, and experienced some of the comments, and some of the remarks, and listening to comments articulated by the Member for St. John's West, such as those he has received, I can only imagine how difficult a referendum might have been in this Province.

Nevertheless, I for one, clearly welcomed the opportunity to go out to my District during the recess to talk to my constituents. And I spent the better part of the six days made available to us - in fact, I had a coffee one morning with my seat mate, the Minister of Forestry, the Member for Windsor - Buchans. And we sat down and seriously talked about the issue and how difficult an issue it was. In those six days, with the exception of Father's Day, because I presume those of us who are fathers returned home for Father's Day, so basically there were five days; I approached the situation similar to the Member for St. John's West, in a number of ways. I visited people door to door, at random, if I saw somebody sitting on their front porch, or if I saw

somebody out mowing their lawn or whatever, I stopped the car and I went in and had a chat with them. I took that kind of a door to door visitation approach.

In addition to that I visited the shopping areas. And in Grand Falls there is one main shopping area, and that is the mall. And in the mall I suddenly realized that after going through the mall, how random the selection was, because a lot of the people I spoke to I did not really know myself personally, and many of them knew me of course, by recognition, I suppose. But it was there that I realized how random the sampling was that I was receiving in terms of opinion. And I, like the Member for St. John's West, went out and I asked people - as a matter of fact I admit frankly, most of the people I talked to, I had to raise the issue, to be perfectly honest with you.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, I met with small groups in my riding, I met with the university professors who asked me to sit down and talk to them. I went to a couple of homes one evening and one afternoon where there were a dozen people, and six or seven at the other home and I took that kind of an approach. I also visited a couple of schools, talked to some teachers, talked to some students. I met with a class and spoke to a class of nineteen students who were, older students doing a post-secondary education course in Grand Falls, nineteen of them, in their early twenties and late twenties.

And in addition to that, of course, I received telephone calls as did all Members, no doubt. And I had a public Members clinic

yesterday morning, the day before I left, which was advertised or promoted the day before on all three radio stations in Central Newfoundland, in Grand Falls, from nine to twelve yesterday, I made myself available publicly for anybody who wanted to come and sit down and discuss the issue with me.

I kept a running tally of the number of people that I spoke to and who had telephoned either my office here in St. John's, my Grand Falls number, or my home. The total number, in my estimation, it is maybe out one or two, but the total number, 80 per cent of whom by the way I spoke to face to face, eye ball to eye ball, the total number that I would consider that I had consulted with during these last five days is about 200 constituents.

Now I have to say, at the outset, I was surprised by two things. Number one: I was surprised at the overwhelming number of people who admitted quite freely and openly to me that they did not have a good clear understanding of all the technicalities and all the details of the Meech Lake Accord. That is surprising to me. I kind of thought that after all of the debate and everything that people would have, perhaps, not found the issue as confusing as many of them said they had.

And secondly, having listened to the open line programs, particularly driving out last Thursday, I was anticipating a barrage of representations from people who opposed or who wanted the Accord rejected, but on the contrary, Mr. Speaker, not by a great amount, but I did find the opposite. In fact, I found a considerable amount of support in

favor of approving the Accord, approximately 50 per cent, somewhere in that area, said to me in discussions that they felt that the Accord should be approved, another 10 per cent or so said to me, as was said to the Member for St. John's West, we will have to trust your judgment and leave it up to you to make the right decision or make your own decision, hopefully it will be the right decision, and about 40 per cent of them outrightly said that the Accord should be rejected. The bottom line there is that there is a pretty divided opinion, fifty to forty basically is what I was guesstimating among those two hundred people.

But I have to add this, Mr. Speaker, because I think there must be a message here somewhere. Our telephone numbers have been published in all the major newspapers across this Province. My telephone number, home, office and Grand Falls number have been advertised in the Grand Falls papers for the last eleven years, quite public, and also my telephone numbers are listed in the Grand Falls and St. John's telephone directories, so one would have expected, I think, that with all of the hype, particularly since the focus of the announcement made by the Premier last Monday, that Members of the House would be asked to cast a free vote, and since the Premier's statement encouraged members of the public to talk to their Members and so on, and indeed, advertising from Government ads themselves over the last four or five days, advertised our telephone numbers to people around the Province and urged their constituents to contact their Members.

But I have to say, Mr. Speaker, I received from last Monday until this morning, let's say - the last time I had a chance to check - I received a total of forty telephone calls. I had eighteen-

An. Hon. Member: Is that right?

Mr. Simms: I am telling Members those are accurate facts, I had eighteen calls in my St. John's office here, This is from constituents, eighteen calls at my St. John's office here; I had twenty at my Grand Falls number, and I had two at my home. I wasn't home. My wife took both calls. I might add, they were not very well spoken calls either, I don't mind saying that. And those forty telephone opinions I refer to are included in the numbers, the total of 200 or so that I am talking about.

I also want to make a further point, a follow-up to a point made by my colleague, the Member for Grand Bank. I said there were twenty calls from Grand Falls. In the five or six days I was in Grand Falls, I received as many calls from other constituents who wanted to talk about other issues. Now, the Minister of Social Services finds that humorous, but I can tell him it is a fact. It is nothing to laugh at. People do have other things on their minds, I say to the Minister of Social Services. And they wanted to talk about issues of personal importance, personal interest to them, bread and butter issues. That is not so hard to believe, is it? I met, for example, in a home with four unemployed workers from Abitibi-Price, who lost their jobs in December as a result of the shut-down of the No. 6 paper machine - the Minister of Forestry

knows the group I am talking about - four of those unemployed workers and their wives. I asked them about Meech Lake afterwards, but they wanted to talk to me about that. I had calls from two constituents, single mothers, who have problems with housing. I had a call from an individual who is trying to get some help from Social Services, by the way, help with their mother. So, Mr. Speaker, there were other people who had other problems.

I spoke to some workers at the Wooddale Nursery who were laid off. I spoke to some hospital workers, some of whom were on strike, some of whom were concerned they may be going on strike, and none of these people, in those groups, expressed their opinion on Meech Lake at the outset at all, and if I had not sort of prompted the issue and asked them for their feedback and views on the thing, they didn't call me to express their views and opinions on that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what is this whole debate all about? It is about a document called the Meech Lake Accord, which Premier Peterson referred to this morning, I guess. The constitutional amendment itself is about seven pages in this document. Now, none of my constituents I talked to had seen this document. Some had seen a reprint of it in the newspaper recently, and others, of course, had some photocopies of the actual documents.

In my own case, Mr. Speaker, my feelings on the Meech Lake Accord are on the public record. It is in Hansard. I participated in debates twice. This is the third debate on this same issue in the last two years, and rather than

get into a big argument and debate at this stage, I guess, simply put, I do not agree and have not agreed with the interpretations the Premier has expressed on the two or three issues he considers to be the most important. They are simply not shared by me. I guess that is the honest answer. Now, I am not a lawyer, 99 per cent of the people in our Province are not legally trained, so in that kind of situation wouldn't it be fair to say that one should try to get as much information and advice as one could, and listen to the opinions of others? And I think I have read and listened as much to most of the debate and discussion, and most of the views on this issue, as most other members in the House. I certainly listened intently to Premier Peterson this morning. I think his was a superb presentation. And he said, basically, in a much more eloquent way, of course, those things I have said in the past.

I have heard people express their views in public forums and on open line programs, I have read letters to the editor, I have listened to open line programs, I have read all of the constitutional material we have all received, barrages of it, legal advice, legal opinions expressed by constitutional lawyers all over the country, and many others in addition. I have tried objectively to listen to what the Premier has had to say in this entire debate. I even went back and read the Premier's speech recorded in Hansard in 1988.

I have to say, though, Mr. Speaker, in talking to people over the last five or six days, I was somewhat discouraged by some of the reasons given by some people for their particular position for

or against. For example, one person supported it, he told me, because he was a staunch Tory. Now, that was not a valid reason, and that was not going to help me come to my decision any easier. And people do not believe you when you talk about that, but it is a fact. Because I asked whatever they were, for or against, will you give me a reason? another person said, because of what Quebec did to us twenty-five years ago on the Upper Churchill. That certainly was a response I received.

And, Mr. Speaker, I even had a person indicate to me that they were opposed to it because of the French overfishing our fishing grounds. Now, I mean, Mr. Speaker, after all, that is a Canada/France issue and it certainly does not have much to do with Meech Lake. But those are and were some of the responses I received. And my point is that those kinds of comments, those kinds of reasons are not helpful to any of us as MHAs in trying to get us to arrive at a reasonable judgement. But I did hear them, and I heard others, of course. For many who supported the Accord and wanted it passed many said, as the Member for St. John's West just articulated, let us get on with it and get on with other things. There are many, many other pressing issues. A lot of people said that. Others sincerely felt that they had read and looked at as much as they could in the whole debate, and in their humble estimation and interpretation, they honestly could not see how it was going to hurt Newfoundland and Labrador. Many said that to me. But, by far, the greatest number of people who commented on the need to pass the Accord were those who

expressed grave concerns. And I cannot accept those who reject those kinds of concerns and simply refer to them as fearmongering or scare tactics. I cannot accept that. People legitimately have concerns about the unity of the country, about the future of the country, and about the role that Newfoundland would play, clearly a diminished role, I guess, in a diminished fashion, should rejection of the Accord come about which might ultimately lead to Quebec's separation from the Canadian Confederation. Many of those who were opposed, whom I spoke to, were sincerely concerned with the distinct society clause, and I think Premier Peterson put it better than I could. And others, of course, who were opposed, were sincerely concerned with the limitations on senate reform in the future. Quite sincere, quite legitimate. Very few, I might add, expressed concern with the companion resolution. Most felt that if Meech Lake passed it would be a helpful step forward; not too many commented on the companion resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I want to relate to you quickly a conversation I had. As a matter of fact, Your Honour was in attendance, as were my colleagues from Stephenville and LaPoile. When we were in Halifax a week and a half ago on a parliamentary conference, we had the privilege and pleasure of meeting a newly elected member of the National Assembly from the Province of Quebec; the first time elected last fall, just a half a dozen months ago, and he was very passionate in his explanation of the feelings of the people of Quebec at that meeting. We did discuss the issue. He was very passionate. One of the startling

things he told me, that stuck in my mind - I do not know if my colleagues will recall it. I am sure they will. But he said that about a year ago, before this entire debate started to escalate in the last year or so, the internal Liberal Party polling in the Government of Quebec showed the level of support for federalism in the Province of Quebec - only a year ago - at about 70 per cent to 75 per cent, and the level of support for separatism was about 25 per cent to 30 per cent. Now, Mr. Speaker, that apparently was one of the lowest levels for separatism in the Province of Quebec since the heydays of Rene Levesque.

And just in the past six months or so, he was telling us, or he was telling me, since the debate has really inflamed, those numbers have completely reversed and his view was that there would be no question, and his fear was that the people outside Quebec do not really understand how serious the people of Quebec feel about this whole issue. But his view was that if Quebec should not become a full partner in Confederation by becoming a signator to the Canadian Constitution, there would be no question, in his view, that the Province would move fairly quickly towards some form of separation, independence, sovereignty association, or whatever. Now my colleagues can comment on it when they get a chance, but that is what he certainly said to me.

On the other hand, in his opinion, if you passed the Meech Lake Accord and Quebec was allowed to become a full partner and a signator to the Constitution, with the present Provincial Government having four and-a-half years

remaining in its mandate, because it was only elected late last fall, he felt there would be ample time, certainly a considerable amount of time to change public opinion on this independence question, if you want to call it that, or separation question, and diminish it to the point where it was just a year ago. What he was asking for was a chance to do that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have also considered the comments of the Premier, including, for example, the comment that he himself now, having come back from Ottawa a couple of weeks ago, has said publicly that he has some doubt himself as to what might happen to the future of the country. He has expressed that concern and that doubt since coming back, and I believe that is one of the reasons why he has taken the approach he has taken. He did not always feel that way.

I also had to consider the fact that the leaders of every government, as the Member for Exploits pointed out today, every government in Canada with the exception of Newfoundland, the leaders of three federal parties, the two territorial Government leaders, I believe, also supported the agreement that was reached a week or so ago. Indeed, nearly all of the leaders of all the official opposition parties in Canada, with one notable exception, of course, Mr. Parizeau in Quebec, have given support to the agreement that was reached ten days ago in Ottawa. So I had to consider all that.

I believe there has been enough debate and discussion about the issue, and that it warranted a review of my own position. So I looked at all the issues, I listened to the debates, I tried

to be as objective as I possibly could. I listened to my constituents. I had to ask myself the question, am I wrong? Are all of these other leaders of all the other governments, and all the official oppositions in Canada, are they all wrong in their interpretation? A good question. I also reread the Premier's comments which he made last November, at the First Ministers' Conference in Ottawa, when he said no single Province has the right to hold up a constitutional amendment. I hear loud and clear the logic in that statement. I understand it loudly and clearly. I also read with interest the words attributed to the Premier in the newspaper just a couple of days ago, where he said if you ask the people to exercise their independent, honest judgement, you cannot deprive them of the right to do it by pressuring them to do it to your point of view. I believe there are many who would say and argue that has precisely been happening here in Newfoundland. There has certainly been lots of pressure on members of the House and, I would argue, lots of pressure on members of the general public for both points of view. But, by far, I do not think there is much argument about the overriding pressure being in favour of the Premier's point of view. I make that comment in response to his own statement.

So, Mr. Speaker, I have listened to the debate, I have read everything I could read, I have been pressured, I have had people threaten me with their votes in a future election. And I am sure everybody else has. I have talked to people. I have asked for advice. I have talked to my constituents. I have read over and over the clauses which

everybody keeps referring to, and those particularly which the Premier often talks about. I have read over and over the interpretation of these clauses by oodles of constitutional experts and other leaders in our country, and I have read over and over the Premier's interpretation of those clauses. I intend to continue to listen to this debate right up to the end. But, Mr. Speaker, I think it is fair to say, and this has to be said and I want to say it before I sit down, that for many people all throughout this country who have experienced the rhetoric and the sometimes bitter debate and discussion of the last few months, for some it will be easy to forget all those comments that were made in the heat of debate, but I honestly fear that for many it is going to take a long time for people to forget a lot of the bitterness that was associated with this whole debate.

As one of the fifty-two MHAs elected to this Legislature and now being given the opportunity to express his views and to express and record a vote on this particular issue, and having asked for advice on the best way to proceed in what I consider to be a rational and sensible way, I went back to the letters to the editor column and had a look once more at another letter, which was in the Grand Falls Advertiser, by a gentleman who had made his views known on this issue when he said: "Put aside the rhetoric, the well wishes, the pats on the back, and zero in on the Meech Lake Accord itself, concentrate on the issue". And he said: "My best advice to the MHAs in the House is to draw two columns on a sheet of paper. In one column put all the reasons you can think of for supporting the issue, and in the

other column, the no column, all the reasons for not supporting the issue". And he said: "I can assure you in the end, you will make the right decision". I think, Mr. Speaker, that was excellent advice. I have done that and I will be voting, not as a Tory, Mr. Speaker, I will be voting as a Newfoundlander and as a Canadian. And I would reject anybody who would question my sincerity in that regard, because I can assure you the decision I am making and going to make will be in the best interest of the people of this Province and the people of the country. So I have done what he has suggested, and I will be voting accordingly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Furey: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleagues, but I rise just to inform Your Honour that Premier McKenna has arrived and I move that the House now adjourn during pleasure.

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour, Aye.

Some Hon. Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: Those against, Nay.

The House is now adjourned until The hon. the Premier McKenna finishes his comments.

On behalf of hon. Members, I would like to extend a warm and cordial welcome to the House to the Premier of New Brunswick, the hon. Frank McKenna.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, as I noted in the House this morning, before Premier Peterson spoke, it is important that the Members of this Legislature hear from other people across Canada, because the decision that we take here today will impact far beyond the shores of this Province and it is important that we hear the views of people who are very knowledgeable in these matters and who have strong views on the matters.

There are matters other than the concerns that the Government has expressed and that other Members of the House have expressed, and I know that Premier McKenna of New Brunswick has himself had very strong doubts about the content of the Meech Lake Accord. He has wrestled with that problem within New Brunswick and, I guess, within himself. He and his House have recently approved the Meech Lake Accord, so I have invited Premier McKenna and I say to him as I said to Premier Peterson, Premier McKenna you do us great honour by coming to speak to us today and in case I forget to do it later, I want to express the gratitude of the House and the desire of the House to hear what you have to say. I invite you now to address the Chamber.

Premier McKenna: Thank you, Mr. Premier and colleagues. Members, Mr. Speaker, to all of you I want to say a most sincere thank you. It is highly unusual to have a parliamentarian from another Province visiting and being invited to speak in your Assembly, and I want to tell you that I consider it a symbol and a sign of

enormous respect and accept it as that. And thank you for the honour. It is indeed an honour.

I also want to tell you why I am here. I had enormous reservations about coming to Newfoundland and, in fact, had declined respectfully the invitation to come up until yesterday, at which time Premier Wells again interceded with me and implored that I come. And Premier Wells can be very persistent and very persuasive, as all of you know. The reluctance I had was really out of respect, out of respect for the sovereign nature of your Assembly and out of respect for your views, both as a population and as elected members. And I seriously doubted if somebody from a Province much smaller than yours could come to Newfoundland and try and reach into his heart and tell you how I felt about this issue without appearing to be somewhat patronizing, and that was never my intention.

So I want to tell you that I am here today because your Premier considers it important. Your Premier is a friend of mine, and out of respect for your Premier I have come to share with you some views I have and hold very personally with respect to this most important constitutional debate that we are involved in. I come to you, not so much as a Premier, but simply as another Canadian who has gone through the same crises of thinking that all Canadians have gone through, who has been torn, just like all Canadians have been torn, about the implications of this significant debate.

If there is any advantage that I could possibly bring to the debate in Newfoundland it is the fact

that I come not from somewhere else in Canada, but that I come from New Brunswick. And in New Brunswick there really are several unique features of our Province which perhaps give us a perspective which might be of some value to you in this debate.

The first perspective that we have is, of course, the fact that we were a Province that had great reservations and, I can tell you, has continued to have great reservations about the Meech Lake Accord. Our reservations started at the very beginning, some three years ago, and started when I, like your Premier now, was Leader of the Opposition. We held those reservations for a long period of time. In fact, you may recall that we had reservations about Meech Lake at a time when it was very popular in Canada to be in favour of Meech Lake.

Secondly, we have the unique distinction in Canada of being the only bilingual Province in Canada. Thirty-five per cent of our population is French-speaking, and that allows us to feel all of the emotions that Canada feels within our Province, because our antennas are so finely tuned to the unique linguistic composition all across Canada.

And, thirdly, we are a neighbour of the Province of Quebec, a neighbour of the Province of Quebec where many of our citizens communicate in the same language, and for that reason we tend to feel every vibration that goes through the Province of Quebec. So those perspectives may add some new dimension to the debate. I can only hope so.

In terms of this debate, I know that all of you are well familiar

with the background of Meech Lake, but just so that I can make my remarks in some kind of a context, I just want to set in a frame of reference how I see the Meech Lake debate and how it has come to this particular point in time. It is important that those people who are listening to this debate understand how this started. It really came about in 1980. At that period of time, the Province of Quebec had elected a Separatist Government, and that Separatist Government was vowed to the sovereignty of Quebec, the separation of Quebec from Canada. The Government of Canada at that time and all of the Provinces engaged in debate and vowed that they would try to meet the constitutional objectives of the Province of Quebec. The people of Quebec became fully involved in that debate, and a dynamic, exciting, passionate debate took place in the Province of Quebec and all across the country. The end result of that debate was that the people of Quebec, by a very clear number of votes, said yes, yes to Canada, no to separation. That was followed within a period of several years by the repatriation of the Canadian constitution.

Very simply, the Constitution of Canada has resided in Great Britain over the last 100 years, and amendments have always gone to Great Britain in order to be finally enacted. So in 1981-'82 the Prime Minister of the day, with the Canadian people firmly behind him, repatriated the Canadian Constitution. At that time, unfortunately, there continued to be a Separatist Government in the Province of Quebec, and that Separatist Government refused to be a signatory to that repatriated

Constitution, and consequently fell outside the constitutional family. Again, at that time, the people of Quebec experienced that enormous sense that their particular concerns had been forgotten. There were two elements in that repatriated Constitution which have come to haunt us. One of those is the notwithstanding clause, which was put there at the insistence of a number of western provinces, and secondly, the unanimity provisions in terms of the amending formula, and the amending formula, which have made it very, very difficult for us to deal with our Constitution. In response to that we ended up, in 1987, having Meech Lake, at which time - I should start in 1986, at perhaps the conference in Edmonton, at which time all the Premiers of Canada, and the Prime Minister of Canada, said that until we resolve this outstanding Quebec question, we cannot proceed with any other constitutional prerogatives in Canada, and so they made a pact at that time that the next round of constitutional talks would be the Quebec round, so that we could get Quebec re-integrated into the constitution and proceed to other constitutional items. And that took place with the Meech Lake of 1987. That required three years before it became final, after the passage of the first resolution which was passed by the province of Quebec. I believe it was on June 23, and that is why the date has come into being. So that was Meech Lake I.

Meech Lake II is what happened several weeks ago when, as a result of the concerns expressed by myself and Premier Wells and Premier Filmon and others all across Canada, the Government of Canada and other Provinces

recognized that Meech Lake would not go through as it is, and that there had to be additions or improvements to Meech Lake in order to make it pass. That is when we came up with what we call, I guess, Meech Lake II, which was a companion resolution to the Meech Lake Accord. So the end result is that we have been engaged in that Quebec round, really, as a result of the referendum in 1980 and events thereafter.

Why did I have reservations from the outset? I want to share those thoughts with you, because I think it should be important to the evolution of your own thoughts on this issue. For three years I have harboured grave concerns about the Meech Lake Accord. Those were concerns that we believe were based on principle; there was no political inspiration for it. At times our views were unpopular, but we persisted throughout those three years, not in rejecting Quebec and their fundamental demands, but in saying that this Accord is not sufficiently generous to a number of groups who are not represented, and it should be made more generous by the addition of other elements. That was the way in which we expressed our concern. We tried to be positive, we tried to be constructive, but we were persistent over those three years and vowed that additions had to be made to Meech Lake if it was going to pass. What were the concerns we had? Well, first of all, on process. It should be obvious to everybody now that the process of arriving at constitutional change in Canada is fundamentally flawed and we can no longer continue to tolerate it. That was true in 1987, it is true in 1990. The process of secret meetings, the

process of lack of public participation, the process by which three years are required for an amendment to become law, with the opportunity for Governments to change or political agendas to change, all of those elements in the process are elements which are unwelcome to any country which needs a constitution that can shape itself to the demands of the country at any particular time. So we believed the process was wrong, and we wanted to change the process.

In terms of substance, we believe that Meech Lake sideswiped a number of groups unintentionally perhaps, but it did sideswipe some groups, and those concerns had to be addressed and improvements made if Meech Lake should go ahead. For example, we felt that by putting the rights of aboriginal and multicultural community members, those collective rights, in Section 16, it left the rights of women hanging out there as potentially being affected by the distinct society clause, so we asked that those rights be shielded as well.

In the case of the aboriginals, we felt it imperative that even if there was going to be a round devoted to those concerns of Quebec to intergrate them into the constitutional family, that a process be set up so that the aboriginals would know, just as surely as summer follows winter, that their concerns were going to be addressed in a constitutionally established round of negotiations. That was a concern of ours.

We were concerned about minority language groups all across Canada, and whether or not the way in which Meech Lake was framed would

make them feel second-class citizens within the country. So we wanted to ensure that those minority language groups received better treatment. Those were the major concerns we had.

We were also concerned about the Territories and what we felt was a lack of judgment in dealing with some of the Territorial concerns, taking away their rights to appoint Senators and Supreme Court members, when, in fact, those rights, at least the right to forward names, had been long-standing. We felt, again, they were sideswiped, and as a matter of simple justice they should be addressed. So those were the kinds of reservations we brought to the table and we persisted, all alone for much of that time, for that period of three years, in advancing those concerns and those reservations.

Why did we agree at the end that the Constitution was sufficiently improved with the second round of the Meech Lake II round that we would embrace that Constitution? Well, I guess it ultimately comes right down to how one feels about the nation, and how one feels about rating a Constitution. I prefer to rely on the following quotation: "Thus a consensor to this Constitution because I expect no better and because I am not sure that it is not the best. The opinions I have had of its errors, I sacrifice to the public good".

We reached the conclusion, very simply, that most of our concerns had been addressed and that those concerns which had not been addressed were not of such sufficient import that we should sacrifice the national good of Canada in order to try to obtain our final objectives. In other

words, we decided that on balance, weighing those few concerns that were not addressed in the second round of Meech Lake against what we thought was in the national interest, when we weighed those two together we felt it was not of sufficient import that we persist in our objections on those several items, and it was very much in the national interest, at that stage, that the Accord pass.

You might say, what has been the reaction to that in the Province of New Brunswick and across the country? Well, the mail has dried up; we do not get a thousand letters a week anymore, and that is probably what we were getting throughout most of the last three years.

What has been the reaction of our voting public in the Province of New Brunswick? Well, let me be blunt with you. I think there are some Members of the public who feel that Frank McKenna sold out, I believe there are some who feel I compromised, I believe there are some who felt we caved in, I believe there are some in our Province who feel we abandoned their interests, I feel there are some who felt we were too soft with our concerns, and I feel there are some in the Province of New Brunswick who feel we should have persisted and held out for every item we were trying to see improved.

What I am trying to tell you today is that I realize that there are those people across the country who have such strong views on this issue that they find it very easy to be critical of what we have done in the Province of New Brunswick. My children have come home from school and said, "Dad, why is everybody saying that you

caved in? Why is everybody saying that you compromised, Dad? Why is it that people are mad at you at the present time, Dad?" I had constituents call and say, "Frank, we expected more of you than that. Why did you not persist? Why did you not go right to the wall with your concerns?"

Well, we have fifty-eight strong MLAs in our Government and all of them have supported our position, all of them have agreed that this was a position they freely and voluntarily wanted to support, without caucus discipline or without free vote. All of them, I know, are suffering the same way in their own ridings. I know, without them telling me, that a lot of them have had to show a lot of courage in facing constituents who would say, "What is wrong with you? Why have you given up the fight? Why is it you feel that the national interest is so important now".

And I want to tell them, any of those who are listening, how proud I am of them that they have come to the same conclusion I have come to. And the conclusion I have come to is that any embarrassment or any humility we might feel because we made a decision to support the Meech Lake Accord is out-weighed a thousand times by our love and affection for this country. Any concerns we might have about the position we took is out-weighed in proportions that are beyond your imagination, by the feeling that what we did was right for Canada. At the end of the day, the people of New Brunswick, through their elector said at the end of the day, the people of New Brunswick through their electors said; yes, we have got strong concerns about this Accord. Yes, you have got

improvements. No, you did not get everything we asked for. Yes, you got a pretty good deal.

But the time has come to stand up for what is in the national interest, not in the Provincial interest. The time has come for you to forget about what is good for your career and about the Province of New Brunswick, and to think about what is good for Canada.

And I can say to you, as I stand here before you today; I would suffer much more humiliation, if that is what was necessary in order for us to find peace in our country. That I would give every bit of pride that I have if I could only see Canadian faces smiling once again with some kind of optimism and some kind of confidence in their future. So that is why we made our decision, we made our decision on the basis that it was in the best interests of this country for us to accept the Meech Lake Accord and to get on with other agendas.

You are in a better position than that in the Province of Newfoundland. You have a Premier who has a reputation unsurpassed across the country for integrity, for principles, for character. You have got a Premier who has conducted himself honourably from the beginning to the end of this debate. And your Government has credibility. A credibility that goes with being consistent, with being credible, with being honest with the people. And you have an opportunity, an unique opportunity in Newfoundland, for your Premier to keep that credibility and that integrity; and at the same time for you to make some small sacrifice for the national good.

Why is it that I feel it is in the national interest that the Meech Lake Accord go ahead? Well, very simply, I guess that comes to the other aspect of what I said gives New Brunswick an unique situation perspective. And that is the fact that we live next to Quebec. We read Quebec newspapers, we watch Quebec television. We tend to know what people in Quebec are thinking because they are so close to us. And we in some small way believe that we understand what is going on in Quebec at the present time.

What is taking place in the Province of Quebec at the present time is an extraordinary feeling of rejection. What is going on in Quebec at the present time is the clear sense by the people of that province, 7 million souls who almost universally feel that the rest of Canada does not want them. Ninety per cent of Quebecers in a recent poll told Bourassa not to go to the First Minister's Conference, and not to negotiate any further on Meech Lake. That it was not in Quebec's interests to get down on their hands and knees to the rest of Canada in order to be able to be a member of the constitutional family. And against all of that, against no response to the referendum, and against the first Meech Lake being rejected and the humiliations gone through with respect to the second round, the Premier of Quebec has gone back to the table time and time again, and recommitted himself to Canada.

And what we have got here is a colossal breakdown in communications between the rest of Canada and the people of Quebec. The message being sent - I know from Newfoundland and from New Brunswick and others is; we have

got some concerns about Meech Lake, but we have no concerns about Quebec. We want to reject Meech Lake, but we do not want to reject you in Quebec. We have got all kinds of problems with what is in Meech Lake, but we have no problems with what Quebec stands for and the distinctiveness of Quebec. That is the message being sent. The message being received in Quebec is; you do not want us. You reject us. You do not want us to be part of the Canadian Constitutional family. You have made your choice Canadians, and we are not part of that choice.

The people of Quebec feel that they have knocked at the door to Canada on three separate occasions. And on three separate occasions that door has been slammed in their face. That is how they feel in the Province of Quebec. Is it true? No, Canada has not slammed the door in their face. But do they feel that way? Yes, I can tell you absolutely, that is the way they feel in the Province of Quebec. They feel rejected. They feel humiliated. They feel that Canadians are not prepared to accept them into the Canadian Constitutional family.

And that is why I believe it is in the national interest that we do this. Because we have got all of these people in Canada who have their emotions aroused and who are feeling so strongly about these symbols. And the symbols that they feel so strongly about at the present time are all being received in such a negative way. And the people of Quebec, I can tell you with certainty, are feeling nothing but rejection at the present time, whether that rejection is warranted or unwarranted.

What are the consequences likely to be of that rejection in the Province of Quebec, and the fact that well over half of Quebec at the present time are supporting sovereignty association? What is the consequences of that in the Province of Quebec? I personally believe that the consequences are extremely serious for Canada, extremely serious. There is virtually no politician left in the Province of Quebec, speaking up for Canada, or federalism. There is virtually no politician left in the Province of Quebec who does not feel that same feeling of rejection and humiliation that I have talked about with respect to the population. And the people and the politicians of the Province of Quebec in my view, if they are rejected this time, are going to be saying, enough is enough. And taking whatever action they feel is appropriate under those circumstances.

What are the consequences going to be? Well I did not come here, and I did not want to come here to talk about doom and gloom. Because, I do not think that is the best way to sell a country is to talk about what horrible consequences will take place, if you do not stick together. You know it is like a marriage. A marriage that is built on fear of falling apart is a poor marriage. A marriage has got to be built on the desirability of living together. And I do not like coming here, but your Premier has been persistent in that, he feels it is important, and I respect that. That somebody talks about what can happen and what, in my view, will happen, should this fail. I can tell you the consequences are very, very serious. The economic consequences, well, perhaps we

fear those a little less than people in the rest of Canada. I say we, the people in New Brunswick and Newfoundland. We have been kicked so hard by the rest of Canada that a few more kicks probably are not going to change our lives, one way or the other. But you know, Members of the Cabinet would know, and businessmen in this community would know, as they know in our Province, that inevitably the political instability, whether it is because of this situation, or because of some other situation, will lead to higher interest rates, and it will lead to lower investment and economic instability, greater unemployment, a risk to our credit ratings all across the country, all of the things that happen when you have got prolonged political instability. I think we can say that with certainty we will face those things. With certainty we will face those things within the coming week. The impact on you will be the normal impact that any Government will have to face and that is the question of whether you deal with it through taxes or service cuts, or whether you borrow money or whatever you do. I have got to face the same situation that you will have to face. But I think those are the poorer arguments for the Meech Lake Accord, the economic consequences. And I do not think that talking about them does a great deal for the mood of confidence in the country. I think another argument though, that should be more persuasive, is an argument again that we in New Brunswick have a great deal of affection for because of its closeness to us, and that is with respect to the language tensions across Canada. The last year has probably witnessed some of the

worst moments in Canadian history, in terms of language tension. And again we feel it right in our soul in the province of New Brunswick, because of our mixed population of French and English. And it starts with Bill 178 in Quebec and in this case that stimulated a great deal of feeling against the Francophones in Quebec. They in turn, turned around and saw unilingual motions taking place in communities across the country and they reacted against that. They in turn sent out signals, and it just - this wave of intolerance rolls across the country like a tidal wave, going back and forth, and back and forth until the population feel weak and dissipated in its presence. And I can predict with certainty that should this Accord not pass, that we will end up seeing the same kind of language tension in our country. Quebec will react as we all anticipate in a very negative way to their rejection. Their reaction in turn will be anticipated by a counter reaction in the rest of Canada, as we react against them. And so on and so on. Back and forth across the country and we will see these waves of hatred taking place once again across our beloved land. We will see flags being burnt and trampled. And we will witness the embarrassment of language disputes and all of the things that have taken place over the last year and a half or so, are going to be reinforced, in the years ahead. We are going to see in addition to that, constitutional paralysis. I think we can predict that with some certainty. If Meech Lake does not go through we do not have the Quebec round done, Quebec is not a signatory, we are not going to be able to go ahead with other constitutional reform. That basically means that the senate is

off the table, aboriginal rights are off the table, any other constitutional arguments or discussions are off the table, and the end result of that is that we are simply not going to have constitutional progress or reform in the country.

We are going to have agenda paralysis at a time when the country, the people, the population are begging us to stop talking about Meech Lake, instead of on June 23 stopping talking about it, we are going to enter into a whole new round of conversations on Meech Lake. Instead of talking about poverty, instead of talking about the environment, instead of talking about the problems that confound the people, the GST, higher taxes, standard of living, all of the things that the people feel are important, we are going to have an agenda that is filled with constitutional items from now on until this matter is resolved whenever it is resolved in the future.

If Canadians are sick of Meech Lake now and the Constitution, how are they going to feel if we have a collapse of these talks and this Constitution predominates the next number of years in Canada.

What else are we going to have? We are going to have alienation. What is going to happen when the west finds out that its enormous hopes for senate reform have been dashed because we cannot constitute constitutional conferences, we will not have Quebec at the table, you can be certain of that, and we are not going to be able to undertake senate reform. How do you think the people of the west or for that matter those Provinces in the east

that are dedicated to senate reform, how do you think they are going to feel when they find out that what the failure of Meech Lake means is the failure of senate reform and we are not going to be able to talk about the subject most important for them.

But they are going to react as any normal people would react. They are going to react against Quebec and against Ottawa and they are going to feel that enormous sense of alienation which has been present, to some degree, even at the present time, in western Canada.

And similarly, how are the aboriginal people going to feel when they realize at the end of the day, they fought this fight, they have stopped Meech Lake and they have stopped all future progress on aboriginal concerns.

How do you think the multicultural community are going to feel, who are desperately trying to have a clause, a statement of principles in Canada, a Canada Clause, that states that Canada is composed of the aboriginals and of the bilingual nature of Canada and the multicultural community, when they find out that all of this Constitutional advancement has been brought to a grinding halt. Alienation, and lots of it, enough to go around for everybody is what I predict if we end up having a failure.

Let me add another one to the mix. The loss of pride and prestige that Canada has carefully cultivated for a century. Imagine, here in St. John's, Newfoundland, American networks covering this debate, how many I do not know, but a number. Well do you think they are here because

they are witnessing the birth of a nation? Do you think they are here because this makes great drama in the United States, that has not even heard of Canada or Newfoundland? They are here because for the first time in the history of the world, they have the opportunity to witness the virtual destruction of a nation without a shot being fired. That is why they are here. They are here because everybody across the nation knows that what they are witnessing is worse than any invasion that has ever taken place in terms of the future of our country. They are here because they are witnessing an historic event, and it is not a proud event. And it is not a joyful event.

Talk about loss of pride and prestige, how do you feel when we adorn the cover of Time magazine like some banana republic. How does it make you feel when the American newspapers are carrying stories about the split up of Canada and which part of Canada they are going to be able to pick off. How does it make you feel as a Canadian when you hear a Premier of a Province talking about actually joining the United States. How does it make you feel as a Canadian to know that in Japan, where our Finance Minister returned from, they are talking about cutting off credit to Canada until such time as they find out whether we are going to be remaining intact as a nation, or have the Deutsche Bank tell us that we are no longer a part of their plans in terms of floating bond issues. How does it make you feel, in the eyes of the world, that the country that was once the envy of the entire world for its record of civility and tolerance and respect for others' rights is

being ripped apart in such a way. What is it going to do to our reputation worldwide to see this happen.

Just as an aside, I can tell the Americans who are watching, however, it will be a long day in July before they pick apart the bones of a nation such as this. Not just a loss of pride, maybe more important than all of the things that I have said, in fact it is more important than all of the things that I have talked about, is the loss of potential, is the enormous dissipation of resources as we grind ourselves inexorably into the ground over this Constitution debate at a time when the people of Canada are pleading with us to be talking about other things, about the greening of Canada, about their environmental concerns and about other concerns.

About the potential that a country that is vast as ours has to lead the world in its record of civility, about the potential of this huge Nation of ours with only 25 million people, in a country as vast as ours. The only other country of its size in the world, the Soviet Republic is breaking up, wracked with all kinds of concern. I mean the loss of potential of a Nation this magnificent, this Island alone, in Newfoundland, you have had in the last several years thousands and thousands of immigrants, many of them Bulgarians fleeing to your shores and to the shores of Canada. We have got hundreds of thousands of people lined up in every country in the world trying to break down the doors to Canada, to get into Canada. How many Canadians do we have fleeing to other countries around the world to try to find refugee status?

How many people are fleeing our country to try to emigrate to other countries around the world? Or as somebody said to me not too long ago, how many times have you seen people backpacking across Europe and whatever their nationality they put a Canadian flag on their back? How many Canadians put an American flag on their back when they go across Europe?

Why do people do these sorts of things? because we as Canadians have a reputation that everybody in the world understands, a reputation for being peaceful and generous and accommodating and compromising in all of the things that we do. We have lived together for a 123 years like that. Canada is a compromise. Let us never deny that. When you get two linguistic communities, two named as the founding members of Canada, and when you get a country that acknowledges that every member of every multicultural community can come here and live in their own culture, and where we can respect the role of the aboriginal people as the first founders of this continent and this country, where we can do all of that within a single country and yet recognize the diversity of each geographic area and each region within each geographic area, all across this country from sea to sea to sea, it is a magnificent experiment. It is one that is the envy of the entire world. And I say to you more than anything else that could ever happen if we do not end up achieving some kind of constitutional consensus, it is going to be the loss of that extraordinary potential for leadership of Canada.

Anyway those are the stakes, those

I believe are the issues and those are the consequences. So what I had to do and what I am asking you to do is, if you believe as I do - and I can tell you I believe in my heart that the consequences that I am talking about are on the horizon for us - if you believe, as I do, then you must ask yourself is the Meech Lake Accord in its improved form so noxious, so objectionable that its passage is worse than risking all of that. Is there anything that is so objectionable, so terrible about the Meech Lake Accord, again in its improved form, that makes it imperative that it be blocked and that we accept all of these consequences?

People talk about the distinct society clause. What they fail to talk about is the distinct society clause can be changed by seven provinces. It is not the offensive vehicle of suppression or oppression that people make it out to be. The preponderance of legal scholarship in the country is that it does not override the Charter of Rights. We even got a review mechanism in by which the Charter of Rights can be reviewed. We have shielded at least three collective interests, and we can turn around and change it with seven Premiers, changing it if it turns out to be as odious as anybody in their wildest dreams even contemplates.

People say what does it mean: distinct society? Well what does peace, order and good government mean? We have lived with that phrase for 123 years of our history and it has done nothing but good for the country. The Americans have lived with the term 'life, liberty and pursuit of happiness', what does it mean? What it means is that it

represents a set of values they can use to adjust to the changing circumstances from time to time.

So, no, is that so odious to you, that concept, that it is worth risking a country over? Senate: For 123 years, we have lived without a reformed Senate. For 123 years, it has been assumed that Quebec has veto power. It is also assumed by virtually everybody interested in Senate reform, certainly the Western Premiers, that we cannot have Senate reform without Quebec at the table. So, is there anything in this Meech Lake Accord that is so odious or so objectionable in terms of Senate reform that it should be defeated? Is there anything else in the Meech Lake Accord that is so odious and so objectionable that its defeat is better for Canada than its passage? Well, in a word, ladies and gentlemen, I guess that is where New Brunswick and I came to our conclusions and where I hope you will come to yours.

To sum it up, I am not here to defend the Meech Lake Accord in its earlier form or its improved form. I am not a fan of the Meech Lake Accord. I am not enthusiastic about the Meech Lake Accord, but I am a fan of Canada and I am enthusiastic about our country, and I believe, before anything else in this debate, the interests of Canada should be kept paramount. This debate is not about words and not about phrases and it is not about constitutional lawyers - God love them, I am a lawyer myself; it is not about intellectual scholars with tenure, it is about Canada, it is about the future of our country, and you have to decide in your heart. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, I want, before Premier McKenna leaves, to express to him the sincere appreciation of all members of the House for his doing us the great honour in this House and for the people of this Province, to travel here today and to express to us the concerns he has just expressed about the consequences of failure to implement the Meech Lake Accord. His particular views on it, I believe, are all the more significant because he was, for so very long, a strong opponent of the Meech Lake Accord, and he has since found that, in his judgement, the best thing for New Brunswick was to approve the Meech Lake Accord with the additional provisions that were negotiated a week or so ago in Ottawa, and you heard him say that they met his concerns and that he views it as of the utmost importance that all of the provinces of Canada approve of the Accord. I wanted the members of this House to hear that particular view. It comes as no secret to Premier McKenna that I am not as strongly of that view as he is, but I wanted to make sure that the members of this legislature heard the depth of concern of others before they were asked to vote on it. I am sure I speak for all members of the House, and I would expect the hon. the Opposition House Leader will add words to it, as well, when I express to Premier McKenna our sincere appreciation for doing us the great honour of appearing and addressing us today. Thank you very much, Premier McKenna.

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

Mr. Simms: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Down here in Newfoundland, we would refer to what the Premier has just delivered to us as pretty powerful stuff. I thank him for it and I speak on behalf of the caucus in this instance when I express those views. The views, of course, that you have expressed are not uncommon to many of the members of this caucus, as you are probably aware, but the message I got from it, I guess, was a little bit more succinct, as opposed to simply saying that what you have expressed is what has been best for New Brunswick. I took the other side of it and thought that he expressed very, very passionately what he thought and what the legislators of New Brunswick thought was the best thing for Canada. On behalf of this caucus, and I am sure, on behalf of all members, we thank you very much, Sir.

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

The hon. the Government House Leader

Mr. Baker: Motion 3, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Bonavista South.

Mr. Gover: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when I voted a few months ago in this House to rescind the Meech Lake Accord, I basically applied two tests to the Accord. And in the process we have gone to over the last week or so, I have re-applied those two tests to my own personal beliefs on the Accord. And I have asked my constituents, through the process of consultation, to express their beliefs on the basis

of these two tests. And I have drawn certain conclusions on the basis of my own personal beliefs and the beliefs which my constituents hold.

Firstly, Mr. Speaker, I have to ask myself; does the Meech Lake Accord reflect the values I feel a constitution for Canada should hold? And when I look at the current constitution as it exists at the present time, I find that in the current constitution the values I hold, and the vision I believe in Canada is expressed in that constitution. Principles and values to be gained from the Constitution Act of 1982, I believe are one; that the current constitution reflects one nation, bilingual, multicultural from coast to coast. Secondly, there is a group of values I definitely believe in, in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Thirdly, I believe the current constitution reflects a principle of equality of the Provinces. And fourthly, in section 36 of the current constitution there is a commitment to equality of opportunity for all Canadians.

And these are values which I deeply hold, and I am pleased to see enshrined in the current constitution. And when I hold the Meech Lake Accord up against these particular values, I find the Meech Lake Accord wanting. I believe the distinct society clause, because it confers a special role on Quebec, will over the course of judicial interpretation, and over the course of time, give an unique legislative status to the Province of Quebec; which is inconsistent with the principle of equality of the Provinces. I also believe over the course of time, that the distinct society clause will

undermine a uniform Charter of Rights and Freedoms across this Nation. I believe the opting out provision of the spending power in the Meech Lake Accord will undermine the commitment to equalization and equal opportunities for all Canadians, as found in section 36 of the current constitution.

And I believe that the Meech Lake Accord, rather than reflecting a vision of one nation, bilingual and multicultural coast to coast, reflects a vision of Canada totally different. A vision of Canada where the Province of Quebec will have special status. Or a vision of Canada where we endorse the two nations concept of Canada.

So, my own personal belief, and I stated this when I spoke to rescind, is that the Meech Lake Accord does not reflect the values I hold dear. I do not want to belabour the point because the Province, I suppose, has heard the arguments pro and con ad nauseam. But I just want to, for the record, state my views and the conclusions I have come to. So on the first test, the Meech Lake Accord certainly does not reflect the values I hold dear. Secondly, I have to consider, from my own personal point of view, do I believe the Meech Lake Accord is the lesser of two evils. That is even though the accord is flawed, and even though the Accord does not reflect the values I hold dear; is it necessary to save the nation? Or can it even achieve the objective it sets out, which is to reintegrate Quebec into the Canadian Constitutional family. I evaluated this particular test at the time I rescinded, and I came to the conclusion at that particular time, that the Meech

Lake Accord could not accomplish its primary objective to reintegrate Quebec into the Canadian Constitutional family. And after reconsidering the matter, I have come to the same conclusion again personally. I believe the Meech Lake Accord has in it the seeds of destruction of the nation and not the seeds of reunification and re-integration of the Province of Quebec. By defining the country in terms of linguistic groups, by granting a special role to the Province of Quebec to preserve and promote its distinct society, I believe it confers on the Province of Quebec a special status and is consistent with the two nation concept of Canada. I also believe the Meech Lake Accord is consistent, in part, with the concept of sovereignty association, which I believe to be increasing political autonomy for the Province of Quebec with economic links to the rest of Canada. And if we look at the provisions of the Accord, the Accord through its distinct society clause, will confer on the Province of Quebec, I believe, a unique legislative role which is consistent with the principle of sovereignty association in the sense that the Province of Quebec will acquire greater political autonomy.

Secondly, in its opting out provision, not only will it undermine the spending power of the Federal Government, but again, it gives Quebec increasing political autonomy, while retaining the benefits of economic association with Canada.

One of the things I find most objectionable, I suppose, in the Accord, is the immigration provisions. Immigrants coming into the country must be

integrated in a Canada, must be integrated into the country of Canada, the Nation of Canada, and the provisions in the Accord which provide for Canada to withdraw from the integration of immigrants into the Province of Quebec and to provide reasonable compensation to the Province of Quebec, so the Province of Quebec can undertake that particular service, is not consistent with a one Nation concept of Canada.

Now when immigrants come to the Province of Quebec after the Meech Lake Accord, if it should be ratified, they will be integrated by the Province of Quebec into that particular distinct society. Therefore, I conclude that the immigration provisions will over a time lead to a two-nation concept of Canada. New immigrants coming to Quebec will not be integrated into the Nation of Canada, but will be integrated into the distinct society of Quebec. And this process is assisted by the compensation given or agreed to be given by the Federal Government to the Province of Quebec. Therefore, I conclude that the Meech Lake Accord is a process of destruction of the nation, and not a process which will save the nation.

Certainly not a process which will build one Canada, and one sense of Canadian nationalism, but I believe will build two senses of Canadian nationalism, one for English Canada and one for French Canada. And in the long run will cause tension between our two linguistic groups and cause tension between Quebec and the rest of Canada, tensions which I believe in the long run will inevitably result in some form of separation for the Province of Quebec. So intellectually I am

not convinced that the Meech Lake Accord can accomplish its primary objective which is to reintegrate Quebec into the Canadian constitutional family.

On the weekend I had occasion to pick up Time Magazine and one of the poll results there that was done in May indicates that 56 per cent of Quebecers are in favour of sovereignty association whether or not the Accord is passed, which again indicates to me that the Accord cannot accomplish its objective of saving the Nation. I think we have come to a crossroads in history and it is time to be going again. I certainly would want to integrate the Province of Quebec into the Canadian Confederation, either on the five conditions put forth by Premier Bourassa which were addressed in the Meech Lake Accord, or on some new conditions which may be put forward at a future constitutional conference.

I have no problem in doing everything I feel that is necessary to reintegrate Quebec into Canada. However, the manner which it is done in the Meech Lake Accord I find completely unacceptable. As a matter of personal conscience, I could not endorse the Meech Lake Accord. But my conscience and my personal beliefs are not solely definitive of the matter. And that is the reason that we were granted time from this House of Assembly to consult with our constituents and to find out what their views were on the particular matter. And we were given a free vote in the House of Assembly not to be bound by any governmental or party position. And we were given the resources by the Government to conduct that process of consultation with our constituents.

Now many times in the history of parliaments free votes have occurred. And, of course, the theory is that a member is always entitled to substitute in a free vote his views for the views of his constituents. However, as has been indicated, I believe this vote is an unique vote. If I substitute my views for my constituents views on any particular piece of legislation or any particular action that this Government takes and my constituents do not like it, then in the next election they can reject me and they can reject the Government and the new Government, theoretically, will repeal the Legislation or repeal the policy measure that is offensive and the damage that is done can be undone.

However, with this particular Constitutional Amendment, given Quebec's veto as provided for in the Meech Lake Accord, if I vote to ratify the Accord then what has been done cannot be undone notwithstanding the electors may reject me at the next election, or may reject this Government at the next election. And therefore, in honour and conscience, I have the obligation to follow the beliefs and views of my constituents.

I have spoken to my constituents on the telephone, I have met with them face to face, and I have polled the District, and from these data I have gathered two conclusions. One, the dominant view in the District is that the Meech Lake Accord is un-acceptable, and two, the dominant view in the District is that my constituents do not accept the argument put forth by the proponents of the Accord that if it is not ratified, the nation will split asunder. These are two clear, unequivocal messages which

have been given to me by my constituents. They reject the Accord and they do not believe that non-ratification will result in the destruction of the nation.

And my District, I suppose, like most Districts in Newfoundland, has the greatest to lose if the nation should fall apart. We are almost entirely dependent on the inshore fishery and accompanying that, the Unemployment Insurance program that goes with it and all other Federal transfers. We are not a wealthy District, but we are a proud District. And I believe the people in my District have the intelligence to understand the issues before them, and they certainly have the intelligence and wisdom to understand the consequences of non-ratification of the Accord which have been hammered home to them time and time again by the proponents of the Accord which is, that if this Accord is not ratified, the nation will break apart, and you will suffer dire economic circumstances.

And notwithstanding that message which they are quite capable of accessing, they have chosen the route to pride and dignity, to put Newfoundland first and to ensure that we have our adequate place in Confederation, to become a full and free participating Province in this Confederation and not the recipient of Federal hand-outs. If the worst case scenario comes to pass and Quebec leaves, my constituents are prepared to accept those consequences. Better to be poor and proud than to suffer perpetual servitude in the hands of regional economic disparity, that is the message I received from my constituents.

And having said that in conscience, I have a strong

inclination to follow what they say, and having said that the Meech Lake Accord is unacceptable in my own personal belief, I have no difficulty voting to reject the Accord.

I listened very carefully to Premier Peterson today and the one remark that struck me was that if the only reason you have to vote for the Accord is to vote for the Accord out of fear, then I urge you to reject it. Well after analyzing the situation in my own mind and in the minds of my constituents, the only reason I would have to vote for this Accord would be fear of the economic consequences that could be inflicted on the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, and that is not sufficient reason to vote for the Accord, and consequently, when the vote is called, I will be voting to reject the Accord.

Thank you Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Green Bay.

Mr. Hewlett: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hewlett: Mr. Speaker, according to what I feel is right, and I am sure against the wishes of some of my constituents, I rise to support the motion.

I say some of my constituents because the vast majority of them have not bothered to contact me on this matter even though my number is published every week in the local paper. What people do contact me on is their daily

struggle to keep body and soul together.

Mine is a rural District, Mr. Speaker, and the Wells Administration is presiding over the decimation of rural Newfoundland.

The Premier who promised to bring home every mother's son is looking the other way, as sons, daughters, fathers and mothers are having to pack up and move away to the mainland of a Canada, that they hope will be intact in a year or two. The welfare recipients, old age pensioners and shopkeepers that are left behind, are also hoping that Canada and its social programs will be there in a year or two. My constituents who are struggling to find enough seasonal work in a depressed rural economy to qualify for Unemployment Insurance benefits are hoping that Meech Lake would go away. They wish their Premier would come home from his endless speaking engagement and standing ovations on the mainland, and deal with the harsh realities of the local economy.

It is funny you know, that when you are too close to a situation, you can lose sight of the forest, because of the trees. Or in this case, the tree. When you watch the national news on television on a given night, it is not uncommon to see a story about a leader of some country in trouble at home, trying to improve his image by a bold foreign policy and highly televised jaunts outside home turf. Prior to the First Minister's Conference on Meech Lake, our Premier had a decidedly lackluster performance in this province. A massive municipal amalgamation scheme had become a political mine field and the

offshore fishery was in a tail spin with the Government doing nothing. The best way to cover up a disastrous performance in these matters is to start a crusade. Luckily for the Premier the Meech Lake agenda was in its final year and this event was an excellent opportunity for him to expound a few of his theories on nation building while providing our people with a very convenient distraction from the miseries at home. As they say in show biz, the Premier was a hit from coast to coast. Mainlanders wanted him to run for Prime Minister, and some locals were even willing to jump over cliffs at his command. But, Mr. Speaker, if thousands of our people jump over a cliff for the Premier, they will be just as unemployed at the bottom of the precipice as they were on the top of it, if not worse so. The Premier found Meech to be a convenient smoke screen, and I have said this many times in the House. I must also say, that once he became involved in this matter, he took this to heart, he pursued his vision of constitutional change with great vigor, to the point where now our Province and Manitoba are the two last hold outs, in what has become a very serious constitutional crisis.

The nation is indeed in danger of coming apart at the seams, and given that Canada is one of the most civilized countries on earth, that is a tragedy. Given that we are a poor Province, very dependent on Federal transfers, old age pensions, family allowance and unemployment insurance that could be a disaster for our Province. But to be fair to the Premier, let us look at a couple of his main concerns with regard to the Meech Lake Accord. The distinct society clause is

probably the item which strikes the best chord with locals in this Province. The Premier has convinced people that in a confederal state, it is improper for any one Province to have any special status. Though most constitutional scholars disagree the Premier insists that the distinct society clause gives special powers to Quebec. Powers not enjoyed by other Provinces. Well, I am really not too worried about how culturally or linguistically unique Quebec is within its own borders. After all we are unique within our borders with the denominational school system. Therefore, I submit that the Premier is a person living in a glass house throwing stones.

The Premier's attempt to put this nation into a straight jacket to make us a version of the American melting pot, cannot and will not work in this nation. His insistence on this matter can only lead to the breakup of the nation. The senate is also another of the Premier's chief concerns with regard to the Meech Lake Accord. I will be the first to admit that our current Senate is a useless anachronism. I will agree that its reform would be useful, but I do not share the Premier's view that his version of a Triple E Senate; equal, effective, elected, is absolutely vital to the further development of this Province. The Americans have a Triple E senate, yet there are tremendous regional disparities in that nation. The Premier would somehow have us believe the unbelievable. That Mississippi is somehow equal to California because they both have two senators. That is like telling me that in the future the two Senators from Prince Edward Island are somehow going to be

equal to the two Senators from Ontario. Recently, in this House, we passed bills regarding the Atlantic Accord on offshore development. This is a regional energy agreement giving this Province powers on the offshore that the courts said we do not have by right. This agreement was reached without the existence of a Triple E Senate. Yet, the Premier would have us believe that such agreements are unlikely if not impossible. Based on these two main concerns of the Premier he is willing, and has been willing to bring this nation to the brink of destruction.

One man's vision becomes a danger for twenty-odd million people. I say no to that, Mr. Speaker, and so do some of my constituents. I have gotten a mixed reaction to Meech Lake from the people of Green Bay, most readily admit that they do not understand the details; some fear for the future of the Nation and our social programs. But most disturbing of all I find those against Meech are so because either, number one, they blindly trust the Premier, or even more frightening because they have a deep distrust of Quebec and its motives.

I understand where this distrust comes from. The French and the English made war over this Island many times over the centuries. Metropolitan France had fishing and shore rights on this Island up until 1904. In the disputed waters near St. Pierre and Miquelon, Metropolitan France has conducted a shameful rape of fish stocks. We got the better of Canada and Quebec in the 1927 Labrador border dispute, but Quebec got the better of us in the Churchill Falls development. Quebec sign language law caused

widespread consternation. These resentments run deep and I have to admit that much of the anti-Meech sentiment in this Province and to some extent in this Nation is anti-Quebec sentiment. Some of it, believe it or not, is even anti-GST sentiment, anti-Federal Government sentiment. These sentiments are real, but they are not proper ones on which to build a constitution or a nation.

Nation building is not something to go about based on half knowledge or deeply felt resentments. Newfoundland and Labrador joined Canada because we were poor and we hoped to avail of the strength and social programs of a much larger nation. The fact that Canada was a confederal state was also crucial, because it allowed us to keep our own unique characteristics, like our denominational school system, while being part of a greater nation.

We have a lot to lose if this Nation falls apart. We receive much more from the Federal Government than we send up in taxes each year, \$2.5 billion more I am told. Will Mobil spent its \$4 billion on Hibernia, if this country is in a state of constitutional crisis? Can a Nation in crisis afford to spend its \$2.7 billion of Federal money also to support the Hibernia project? If Quebec separates will B.C., Alberta, and Ontario continue to send us billions funnelled through the Federal Government? If Quebec separates will we continue to have the same or any level of pensions, family allowances or UI benefits? Even the Premier admits he cannot answer these questions with certainty, but he appears to be willing to take that gamble.

Are there so many of us who would rather fight than eat, especially if we are not really sure what we are fighting for, but we are only really sure of what we are fighting against?

Mr. Speaker, let us not jump over the cliff with the Premier, but then again he has not jumped yet. Maybe he intends to remain on top, and watch us jump. That may be what this free vote is all about. The Premier has whipped this Province and this Nation into a Meech Lake frenzy, and now at the last moment he is not sure if the cliff jumping exercise is appropriate. After bringing us galloping to the edge he now says stop, think twice before you jump. I say, Mr. Speaker, let us not jump because we are in a frenzy and out of breath, let us think twice because that jump may be our last.

Mr. Speaker, I agree that Canada is more than just the sum of its constituent parts. However, because Canada is a confederal state the individual parts do have a right to their own distinctiveness and nobody can deny that Quebec, a founding partner in this country, is the most distinctive of all. If our Constitution cannot accommodate such a reality then we shall probably end up with no country and no Constitution. Meech Lake may not be perfect, but it is all we have at the current time to keep this Nation together. If it fails I do not envision another round of talks with ten provinces at the table. The Province of Quebec has been a difficult sister province at times, but I would rather have the Province of Quebec on our Labrador border than the Republic of Quebec.

Mr. Speaker, I implore Manitoba's native leaders to let the Accord pass. If not they may find that a fractured country is far more difficult to deal with than a united one. They also may find that some of those who would deny Quebec its distinct society would be among the first to deny them their aboriginal rights. In any case regardless of what happens in Manitoba, assuming the Premier gives us a vote, I shall vote for the motion, I shall vote for a united Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gullage: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Firstly, I would like to say what a privilege it is today to be given the opportunity, as a Member of this House, to speak on this most important issue.

All of us, of course, from time to time, have the privilege of speaking, either in our Ministry or as Members of the House of Assembly, but I do not think any of us will ever have an opportunity to speak again, or certainly have ever had the opportunity in the past to speak, on such a momentous and historic occasion and probably will never have an opportunity in the future.

Indeed the decision we make on Friday will be a most momentous decision and I am sure that all of us realize that. The seriousness of the moment, the fact that it

has taken a great deal of deliberation on all our parts over the last short period of time, rather intensely, but certainly the thought process and the procedure has gone on now for a long time.

The first time I had the opportunity to speak about Meech Lake was back in 1988, shortly after having been elected to the House of Assembly in a by-election and at that time, it was not my maiden speech, but I think it was the one directly after that one, I chose the topic of the distinct society as far as Quebec was concerned, distinct society status, and compared it to Newfoundland and Labrador, and the fact that, indeed, Newfoundland and Labrador is distinct in many, many ways. I do not want to revisit in detail what I said that day, but I think it is worthy of note that our history, much like Quebec and New Brunswick, we have a past that includes both the French and the English presence.

Indeed, the fishery itself brought many nations to our shores over many centuries, and as a result of conflicts over the fishing grounds, the French and the English occupied and had status in Newfoundland, changing hands many times. Five or six battles, in fact, were fought right here in St. John's itself, with the City changing hands several times. In fact, St. John's was the location of some five forts at one time, probably more actual battles were fought historically in Newfoundland concerning the two founding nations than in any other Province.

So we do have an affinity, indeed, we have a great French presence as well, not as great as New

Brunswick with 35 per cent French speaking, certainly not as great as Quebec, but we do have a French presence, in many, many locations throughout this Province and in Labrador.

Just last week, Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of spending almost an entire week in Quebec City, my wife and I, we spoke with many, many Quebecers. We had a chance to discover, on an immediate basis, how the people of Quebec feel about the dilemma that we find ourselves in, we certainly had an opportunity to see how the linguistic, the cultural, to see those feelings first-hand.

I do not think there is any question that the major issue facing us and facing Canada is the fact that Quebec wants to maintain its distinct status with its culture and particularly with its language. I think that is at the very core of the problem. I believe it is evident in Quebec right now, from my first-hand knowledge and having seen it, the fact that French is spoken almost exclusively and they want it that way, the fact that all of their signs are in French, very little English seen, they have a great fear, Mr. Speaker, that in fact their culture and their language will disappear, will be assimilated within North America because of their having some 7 million of population compared to 270 million English speaking.

I happen to believe, Mr. Speaker, that Quebec will not separate from Canada, irrespective of the result of Meech Lake, whether it is passed or otherwise, because, either way, of course, our problems are far from over. I believe that their best opportunity of preserving their

language and their culture is within Canada and protected by Canadian laws and Canadian legislators.

Mr. Speaker, over the last week or so, I have had the opportunity to have two public meetings, one in St. John's at City Hall, and one in Mount Pearl at their City Hall, where I was surprised that almost everybody who attended, some seventy people in all, almost everybody came to the microphone and had something to say. Now, I don't really believe that the majority of Newfoundlanders are uninformed about Meech Lake. I think this debate has gone on for a fair while. I do believe that they have very little knowledge of the legal and constitutional details. Like any legal document, it contains a lot of detail, a lot of legal language with which the average person on the street would certainly not be familiar. But, I think, as far as the main clauses are concerned, the people I heard in the public forums that were held over the last couple of evenings, were indeed very, very well informed. And, whether they made themselves informed, took the time to become knowledgeable over the recent past, or whether, in fact, they had a good knowledge of Meech Lake, of the implications of the constitutional debate all along, I am not sure. But, certainly, I can say they had very great knowledge on those particular evenings.

The majority of those who were there spoke out against the Accord, and they gave reasons why. Others gave reasons for supporting the Accord.

You know, we had another option presented to us and we have, in fact, adopted that option here in

the House of Assembly, of taking a referendum. We, because of the time frame, the fact that the Prime Minister had compressed the period of time available to us into such a short time frame, of course, we are now in this scenario where all the members of the House of Assembly have to speak for their constituents and speak for themselves, and ultimately, make a decision on Friday.

But, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you, the people who came out to the public hearings - and maybe it is a great lesson to us and to all others involved across Canada in this constitutional debate - those people welcomed the opportunity of getting to their feet and having something to say. I think it was a worthwhile exercise and I know other members have said the same thing, others will say it later, but I think the process of public hearings is a very, very important one; I think people welcome the opportunity, and they certainly have a lot of important points of view that we need to hear, as members of this House of Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, probably the most important issue facing us in this dilemma is Senate reform. I happen to think it is, because I made the point earlier that distinct status and the situation in Quebec, as far as their culture and language are concerned, I feel will resolve itself over time and I do not feel that we will see separation as a result. Senate reform, however, is a major concern of mine. It always has been. The fact that we now have a situation where we have unanimity provision contained in Meech Lake, means that it is going to be very difficult to see Senate reform come about in Canada. When I look

at the regional disparities that exist right now, where some two-thirds of foreign investment from outside of Canada flow into Ontario, one-half of all Canadian research money is spent in Ontario. Mr. Speaker, there is only one way to redistribute the wealth that is available in Canada, the wealth that is available predominantly in Central Canada, in Ontario and Quebec, and that is to provide some way to have equal representation and equal say throughout the country.

Mr. Speaker, the U.S. Constitution in 1787, when the debate was on concerning that constitution, they had the same dilemma we have, and that is how to protect the interests of both the large and the small states. We have the same problem now, of how to protect the interests of both the large and the small provinces, the rich and the poor. Roger Sherman, at that time in 1787, proposed a compromise that resulted in two senators per state, regardless of size, regardless of population, and it resulted in maintaining the strength of the strong and making the weak strong.

Mr. Speaker, we are in the same dilemma now and we need the same solution. We badly need a reform Senate. What was proposed at a recent meeting of the First Minister's was a first step, in a way, but was not part of the agreement. It was simply a promise for the future. A promise that with the generosity of Premier Peterson, who was here this morning, agreeing to give up, I believe, six Senate seats and to add seats to the other provinces out west. I believe their numbers were raised to eight seats. And in the Maritimes to twenty seats for all the Maritimes, and eight

in Newfoundland. That was a welcome compromise, a welcome initiative on Premier Peterson's part. However, Mr. Speaker, it is not a fait accompli. It was not part of the agreement. It is simply a promise for the future.

And on this most important issue, we have to see change. I do not think there is another issue facing us now in the country more important than the regional disparities and differences between parts of this country. And not only are we concerned, but when we look at what is happening out west; Preston Mannings, Western Reform Party talks about separation of the western Provinces. When we look at what might happen after Meech Lake, if Meech Lake passes or fails. We have to consider what might also happen out west.

There is a great concern about Senate reform in this nation. We have heard it over the last few weeks, and we will hear a lot about it in the future. But there is absolutely no other way that I have heard of, and I am sure that members would agree, to achieve any kind of equality, elected people in the upper House, equally represented across the country.

An equal elected effective Senate is the only way that we are going to see a change and regional disparities hopefully eliminated, but certainly reduced. Because as long as we have our present system of Government, where the majority of elected members of the House of Commons are in the central Provinces and have the majority; we will see regional programs, that simply mean that if they are spending \$X million in the Atlantic Provinces, there will be the same amount spent in Ontario

and Quebec, or in B.C. and other Provinces. And what I am saying, in effect, is literally awash because our programs and our supposedly regional development programs, initiatives to help us and to assist us, with extra dollars - equalization dollars - are matched by monies spent in the richer Provinces. So that makes absolutely no sense to be continuing this way. The only way to correct it is to identify that real differences do exist, Mr. Speaker, and that the poorer Provinces - whether it is done on a basis of unemployment statistics or some other means - the poorer provinces are identified and targeted for extra money compared to the richer Provinces.

Per capita income in Newfoundland in 1949 was 53 per cent of the national average. In 1989, would you believe, it is 56 per cent of the national average. We have managed to raise it by three percentage points in 50 years. So we have not come very far towards equalization, as far as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are concerned.

Just to prove my point on regional disparity, recent Bill C-3 which passed the House of Commons in June 22, 1989, and the Bill concerns regional development in Ontario and Quebec. A Bill targeted towards those two Provinces. 'The minister should exercise the powers and perform the duties and functions assigned to the minister by subsection 6(2) in a manner that will promote economic development in areas of Ontario and Quebec, where low incomes and slow economic growth are prevalent, or where opportunities for productive employment are inadequate.'

I could go on with the other clauses, but the point is, there was a bill designed, introduced into the House of Assembly and passed to promote industry, trade and commerce, was the thrust of the bill, to promote those three areas primarily in the two richest Provinces of Canada. Mr. Speaker, if we are going to promote industry, trade and commerce in two Provinces that already are the wealthiest in the country, and not have a bill that speaks also to the regional disparities of every other region of the country, I think it proves the point, Mr. Speaker, that we have great need of Senate reform.

Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege in April of representing the Province, representing the Government, along with Senator Marshall, representing the Federal Government, in Gallipoli, in Turkey. The seventy-fifth anniversary of the Gallipoli campaign where most nations in the free world were represented. Mr. Speaker, it was a moving moment when we stood at the first memorial, the first ceremony with a former Newfoundland soldier, a ninety-two year old, who had flown in from the United States to be with us for that occasion. For those of you who remember your history, in the first World War, we were the only Province in Canada with representation, and in fact at that time of course, we were a separate nation, some twelve hundred Newfoundlanders went over to that particular campaign and over two hundred lost their lives. The only Canadian representation at the time were some members of the medical corps. So indeed, the ceremonies were very meaningful to both Canada and particularly to Newfoundland. Hence, the presence

of Senator Marshall and myself representing the Province. But it was a moving moment when we were there. And we talked about it afterwards, and we talked about the dilemma that Canada was in. And Mr. Speaker, I believe we have to do all we can to keep this country together.

I do not know whether Quebec will separate, I think it is a guessing game on all our parts. I know there is a feeling of separatism amongst some people in Quebec, obviously, we have a separatist party in the Opposition there. But my feelings certainly are that I do not feel they will. I think the people of Quebec, deep down, from the people I have spoken to in Quebec, have a deep feeling for Canada, they know they are better off in the Canadian system involved in the Canadian Constitution, the Canadian Legislatures and Canadian Laws, than they are trying to manage alone, as literally an island surrounded by the United States on one side, and the Canadian Provinces on the other, on both sides of them if they separated. Mr. Speaker, I do not think it is going to take place.

I do believe we have a long period of reform ahead of us, whether Meech Lake passes or not, but I do believe that we have to do all that we can, and I know we will, to keep this country together.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to see the process through until Friday. I have said, both at the public meetings and to people who have called me that, irrespective of the fact that right now, of course, all the calls I am getting, and indeed the representations that the people speaking at the public forums, are

some 85 per cent against Meech Lake and urging me not to vote for Meech Lake.

My comment to anybody who has asked me is that I feel that we have two full days ahead, I want to hear from as many more people who will call me, others who will write and send in ballots by mail and respond to the newspaper ads that I have in, I want to see the process right through until the final vote. I think that is important that we listen to the people until we finally vote. This is such an important occasion that, Mr. Speaker, I think we should do all we can, both now in debate, in agonizing over a decision, and afterwards, regardless of the outcome, certainly as a Legislature, as a Province, and as a country, do all that is in our power to keep this great country together.

Thank you Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for St. Mary's - The Capes.

Mr. Hearn: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker, and I, like all of the others who have proceeded me, would like to say that it is a distinct pleasure and an honour to be able to participate in such a debate. It was with great enjoyment that I listened to the words of wisdom from two distinguished gentlemen, the Premiers from Ontario and New Brunswick, Premier Peterson and McKenna. Certainly I think we all in the House, both sides, members who feel differently on the issue benefitted greatly from their words and certainly from the experiences they have gone through.

The speaker who spoke before me concentrated heavily on the Senate, and I would suggest perhaps in light of questions I asked before, maybe we should check the effects of the elected Senate in the United States, the Triple E Senate before we get hung up too much on the Senate. But in my few words that I have to say this evening I am not going to dwell on these specific points in the Meech Lake Accord, we have argued them over and over and over and certainly the two Premiers who spoke here today have covered the points much better than I would ever hope to do.

I would also like to say to our own Premier that undoubtedly his efforts led to some improvements in the original Meech Lake Accord. He certainly created an awareness which will assure that our concerns and the concerns of all Canadians will receive much more attention at the national level than ever before, and I commend him on that.

The history perhaps of the Meech Lake discussions in our own Province goes back to the meeting, the Meech Lake Conference in 1987, and after that time we here in the House discussed the Accord and voted upon it. And I at the time voted in favour of the Accord. Sometime ago I voted against rescinding the resolution, which we had approved here in the House, for a number of reasons. Then we had intervening elections and we had the new kids on the block, the three new Premiers with new interpretations, new concerns, and in some cases a desire to put their own personal stamp on the future of the country. This created a public awareness that had not been there up to that time. And in light of that, and

in light of all the ensuing events it is time for all of us to perhaps reassess our deliberations to date on the Meech Lake Accord, specifically, when we look at the add-ons as a result of the most recent conference.

And then, of course, we had the input from our constituents. A lot of people say our constituents do not understand the Meech Lake Accord. It is not that they do not understand, many of them will tell you they know very little about it. It is not that they do not understand it. It is not that they do not have the ability to assimilate the Meech Lake Accord, it is because they have too many other things to worry about. And in many parts of this Province right now the least concern to many of the people who are trying to make a living, or wonder if the opportunity is going to be there this year for them to make such a living for themselves and their families. They are not overly worried about the Meech Lake Accord.

But in my own deliberations, in the phone calls - although I must say some people today said they had few phone calls - the House Leader I believe said he had forty, and he was sort of scoffed upon by some others. I had only seven calls directly related to the Meech Lake Accord and two of those were not even from my District. I had several others who brought up the topic, I made some and I consulted widely in the District, and I must say my constituents, as I knew they would, understood the Meech Lake Accord, the implications, and the direction they gave me was the one I expected, almost unanimously, we elected you to do the job, you are best prepared to make the

decision, because in the end you alone are the one to make it. And I respect that and I appreciate it.

But the general public regardless of how they feel or regardless of the percentage, and when we talk of percentage of the electorate, we are talking winning and losing an election. And some of us worry about that and some of us do not. But the general public can argue that somewhere down the road they did not understand the Accord or its implications. I won't be able to make that argument, Mr. Speaker, because I do understand the Accord, and hopefully, I understand the implications, and I must make the decision and it is my head that will be on the block.

In 1982, we ended up with our own Constitution, brought back to Canada by Prime Minister Trudeau, at the time. Quebec, however, was not a signatory to the Constitution. In 1987, after years of deliberations, the Meech Lake Conference was held. The main aim was to bring Quebec into the Canadian family, because all the others had already been accommodated, accommodated in different ways. We have our own special provisions in the Constitution. We have been recognized in ways, as our own little distinct society. Quebec, perhaps, can be looked upon now as the prodigal son. They were off on their own, and they suddenly, with some accommodations, decided to come back, and when they came back, there are those among us who are going to the Prime Minister, to us legislators who will make the decisions, saying, 'Why should we accept them? Their demands are excessive. Why are you giving them so much?' Maybe we should be reminded that Quebec is a brother who has not been a member of the

family for maybe all the right reasons, at least as far as they are concerned, all the right reasons. And now, all the Premiers, in 1987, and the Prime Minister, agreed to accept and perhaps throw the feast that welcomes Quebec back into the family. But there are those who say, 'No. Are they asking too much?' Maybe we should reassess our reasons for asking those questions.

Years have been spent trying to find the compromise with which everyone agrees, but the main thing was that an agreement was found. Perhaps, as Premier Peterson said, this is the first time since the battle on the Plains of Abraham that we really have come together as Canadians and that there was a complete and a free coming together.

One argument against the Accord, and perhaps rightly so, is that even with the add-ons the Meech Lake Accord is a flawed agreement; consequently the years of work and the years of compromises which have been made should be rejected. This could lead, of course, to despair by those who were involved, or who will be involved in the future.

The other argument is that we have come a long way and that, among provinces, there is a great degree of satisfaction in the knowledge that we can agree on progress to date. We can improve on this in the future.

Constitutions, Mr. Speaker, are like cars, they are made by people for the benefit of people, but they are always refined and improved over time. I, perhaps, unlike some others, have faith in my fellow Canadians, faith that

they will work together for the improvements that are so badly needed. We have come so far since the Plains of Abraham, we have come so far since even 1982. Why throw it all away in order to start again? We have made it to third base, Mr. Speaker. Are we upset because we didn't hit a home run? Shall we ask for another chance? Do we want to go back and bat again? When we used to play on the sandlots back home, you made your own rules, especially if you were the biggest fellow on the team. I was never the biggest fellow on the team, so I had to go along with what others suggested. But, if you didn't get a home run, you said, 'Well, I will get another chance.' And we can ask for another chance and maybe we will hit a home run. But, then, again, we might strike out. We are on third, Mr. Speaker. Do we have faith in our team-mates' ability to get us in, even if it is with a sacrifice bunt? If we support the Accord, we should do so, not because of the fears, the threats or the negatives, we should support it because of the positive implications, recognizing it for the building block it is. Is it good? Is it bad? Maybe we should ask, is it better?

Concerns have been expressed, the main two concerns, about the unanimity clause and the distinct society. Anybody who listened to Premier Peterson this morning, I would think, would have very few concerns about the distinct society clause anymore. Quebec is a distinct society. We are a distinct society. The unanimity clause was always with us. It has been extended to cover five other items. Some people think that with a unanimity clause there will never be, can never be a change in our Constitution. That is not

correct. The unanimity clause is not a blanket clause. It covered five areas previously. It has been extended to five more, two of the more controversial and concern ones being the Senate and of course the addition of new provinces to Canada. And if that is a big concern to the Northwest Territories and the Yukon why then are they supporting the Accord? Why did the leader of the Northwest Territories come here to Newfoundland to ask us to support the Accord? A person who is a very, very close personal friend of mine.

People look at the Meech Lake Accord as they would look at a doughnut, Mr. Speaker. There are those who see the doughnut, and there are those who see only the hole. We can argue about the process, if there was anything flawed, then it was the process. Including what we have gone through over the last four or five days. But the process will be forgotten, maybe even the players will be forgotten. Memories will fade as players fade from the scene, but the result remains. The bruises, the scrapes, the body checks, the penalties, the moves, the counter moves are never remembered. Only, that the trophy was won. The process is not what we are considering, Mr. Speaker. That is another battle, for another time. The result and the effects of that result is what we must assess. I have wrestled with this decision, as I have wrestled with no other, since I decided to get married. I have tried to concentrate my attention on the Meech Lake Accord and the add-ons, nothing else, specifically on the Meech Lake Accord and the add-ons. What they say, what they entail. Not what people think it might say, what people think is in

the Meech Lake Accord, what the people think is omitted or there in the add-ons, which is not a reality. I have tried to separate all of these things and look at exactly what is there and what affect it will have on the country. I have tried to separate rhetoric from reality, but still the decision did not come easily. Mainly, because I recognized the importance of such a decision. I consulted my family, my friends and of course my constituents. Realizing only too fully that in the end the decision would be mine alone. If my constituents do not agree with the decision I make, then undoubtedly, I will pay the price. But, Mr. Speaker, politicians come and go, with no affect on the country. Countries come and go, but then everyone is affected. That is the difference. This country, Mr. Speaker, is much bigger than I. Consequently, my decision must be on the basis of what is best for my family, my community, my District, my Province and my Country. A family which I love so dearly. A community where I was born and brought up and where I have lived all my lifetime. Where the people are the salt of the earth. My district, where the people have placed their faith and trust by electing me and re-electing me with unprecedented majorities. A Province that stood the test of time and what can I say about it? How can you compare the incomparable? And, my country, a diversified country, stretching from sea to shining sea. The true north, strong, free and hopefully forever united. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to keep it that way. And that is why I will vote yes to accepting the Meech Lake Accord. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Furey: Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to thank the Premier for giving me this opportunity to speak, not as a minister of his Government, not as a Government member, but simply as a member. And as a member, one of fifty-two, I am grateful, very grateful to be freed up to speak my mind in this historic debate.

Mr. Speaker, the past few months in this country have been an excruciating and painful experience, not just for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, but for Canadians from coast to coast as we attempt collectively and individually to hold the nation up to the light in focused self-examination. In living rooms in large cities, in small kitchens in northern isolated towns, on farm land and in fishing boats everywhere, Canadians are asking themselves a very simple question. Is there a future for Canada?

The nation, I believe Mr. Speaker, finds itself confused and torn in all directions. It is a nation stumbling and staggering under a heavy burden, a nation where the center cannot hold and where leadership is desperately scarce.

Is there a future for Canada? The question comes to surface, Mr. Speaker, and stares into the faces of average Canadians because of a deal, an Accord, an agreement, an agreement reached between eleven men one night at a lake called Meech. There, while the nation went quietly about its business, or some say while the nation slept, these men welded together a deal which, in their collective wisdom, would make Canada whole

again, that would, in their words, bring Canada together by bringing Quebec back into Canada, into the fold, in from the cold.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when I hear that argument I ask people to consider three things. Firstly, that during the patriation of the Constitution in 1982, seventy-two of the seventy-five members from Quebec, members of Parliament, elected by Quebecers to go to Ottawa, voted to patriate the Constitution. They spoke for Quebecers, seventy-two of seventy-five members from that Province, so Quebec was not left out in the cold.

Secondly, consider that senior ministers of the day, including the Prime Minister, were from Quebec: Trudeau, LaLonde, Ouellet, Pinard, Johnson, Chrétien. So Quebec was not left out in the cold.

And consider thirdly, Mr. Speaker, that Quebec's Provincial Government of the day was led by separatists. Mr. Levesque's single-minded credo was independence first, independence always. So why would a Provincial Government that espoused independence, the fracturing and breaking of a nation, sign a deal? You do not sign in, Mr. Speaker, when your aim is to sign out. So Quebec was not left out in the cold.

They had members of Parliament from their Province, the great majority of them, seventy-two of seventy-five, who voted for it. The most senior ministers in the inner Cabinet, from the Prime Minister right around Planning and Priorities, were from Quebec. And, thirdly, they were led by a separatist Provincial Government

who wanted out not in.

So, Mr. Speaker, in the wee hours of the morning, Mr. Mulroney and the ten sleepy Premier's emerged from the Langevin Block in Ottawa to face the camera and to publicly smother each other with affection after Meech Lake I, never once saying to the other 26 million Canadians who are Canada, what do you think of Meech Lake? Do you like this deal? Do you want time to offer back your comments about this deal? Would you like to have a national referendum on Meech Lake I? Do you want to have public hearings? Would you like to have input? They never even asked, Mr. Speaker, Canadians everywhere, do you even think, let alone what do you think, of this deal? - not one question.

And so, Mr. Speaker, after that initial day at Meech Lake and Langevin Block, three years pushed us by quickly and suddenly Canadians witnessed another unbelievable, almost unbearable spectacle, Sunday dinner for seven days with Brian Mulroney.

Under Meech Lake I, eleven men, in secret, sat together to change the fundamental law of the land - under Meech Lake I. Under Meech II, eleven men again, in secret, sat together to attempt to change the fundamental law of the country, the fundamental law of the country, and as Canadians witnessed the strong-arm tactics of Prime Minister Mulroney, and with the consent of eight of the premiers, these nine men staked out their position on Meech Lake I and decided to play the waiting game, the game of bending the wills of the other two premiers to come around to accepting Meech Lake II. That was the game they played, the waiting game, and it

almost worked, Mr. Speaker.

It is not fair to condemn Brian Mulroney alone for Meech Lake II, he deserves all the condemnation for Meech Lake I. But although he led the pack, the process was agreed to by the premiers, these men who sat around, nine of them, agreeing to wait out and play the waiting game of bending the wills of the two holdouts, Vander Zalm, Devine, Getty, Peterson, Bourassa, McKenna and Ghiz and Buchanan collectively. The game was one of waiting, holding out to the wee hours of the morning, for seven days, sometimes as long as fifteen hours a day. So one Prime Minister and eight premiers, these nine, must bear the collective guilt for what everybody is condemning as the so-called process which has aggravated, agitated and made many Canadians very despondent. If they were my Premier, these holdouts, if they were my Premier, any one of them, I would have been sadly ashamed of them on this particular issue, the issue of process. Not one of them, not one of the holdouts who were playing the waiting game, publicly called for open democratic visible hearings with all First Ministers exposed to the country so that the country could participate in this very important matter. Only - only - Premier Wells and Premier Filmon constantly asked for open and public meetings. My only regret as one member speaking individually in this Legislative Assembly is that neither of them walked away after desert on Sunday night, and public meetings or no meetings should have been the cry that went forth from the Museum of Civilization. That is my great regret, Mr. Speaker, that my Premier and the Premier of Manitoba was put through such an

agonizing and heart-wrenching process.

At any rate, Mr. Speaker, Meech II is where we are now. And just before I look at this Accord that has carried so much discord in our land, let me say a personal word through the media to Quebecers, ordinary Quebecers who genuinely love their country, Canada, and who harbour no shame for the Maple Leaf, and there are many millions, Mr. Speaker, who harbour no shame for the Maple Leaf, let me say to those Quebecers that I know, I know in my own heart that you love and care for your country. I know because some of you have taken the time, especially over the last week and-a-half to phone me personally. You took the time to look up my number and to phone me, and I have talked to many of you about your deep and true concerns. And I say through you, Mr. Speaker, as I have said to them, that they cannot rest the blame of what is happening with respect to the vacuous leadership in our country, they cannot lay that on their own shoulders. All Canadians and all Quebecers must shoulder the blame for the poor quality of leadership shown by both Mr. Mulroney and Mr. Bourassa in this debate. The true measure - the true measure - of their weakness, is how they behave when the separatists shout and raise their heads against the country. Mr. Mulroney and Mr. Bourassa tremble and shudder. Instead of dealing with them courageously and facing them straight on, they hide behind the thin veil of nationalism, Mr. Speaker.

Separatists blackmail people. They do not want any part of this country. They do not put Canada first. They are weaklings, those who fall in line and cater to the

separatists sentiment because separatists are contra-Canada, they are anti-Canadian, they do not want to be part of this country. And, Mr. Speaker, Pierre Elliott Trudeau put his country first. And he was rewarded by being elected Prime Minister for sixteen years, because he put his country first. It was not easy for him. It must have been gut-wrenching and terrifying at times to say no to his province, but he said no on many occasions. He did not shudder and slink away and tremble at the sight of separatists, he courageously faced them and dealt with them and told them no, in the name of the country and for the good of the country. From coast to coast the answer is no. So love him or hate him, Pierre Elliott Trudeau showed the stuff of real leadership when it came to dealing with people who wanted to break up this great nation.

And I believe that Mr. Mulroney, and Mr. Bourassa to some extent, have chosen the easy way out. Take a poll and see how people feel, and do as the poll tells you. Government by Gallup. The tough decisions are made by Mr. Gallup through the masks of Mr. Mulroney and Mr. Bourassa. Separatists are going to be around for a long, long time. They do not want to be part of this land. And maybe it is time Canada told the separatists to stop masquerading as Canadians, slinking through our society planting seeds of deception. And, I say to you, Mr. Speaker, and I say it to all Members of this House, I am deeply disappointed, deeply, deeply disappointed at the true lack of leadership shown on the national stage and in the Provincial capital of Quebec when it comes to

dealing with these people who want to take away our country from us. The average Quebecer loves this country and loves this country deeply. And Canada is not a country, Mr. Speaker, that was born of hatred, it is a country that was born of tolerance, and respect, and love, and sharing, and caring and believing in each other. That is what this country is. Separatists have one goal. The goal is to separate. And I do not believe separatists speak for ordinary Quebecers who have a genuine love of this country. And, so, perhaps it is time our leaders stepped out of the separatists' shadows and challenged them and faced them squarely and told them no, you are not going to break up this country and I will not flirt with you any more. Face them, face the separatists, do not flirt with them.

Mr. Speaker, when I talk about Meech Lake II I ask myself what does this agreement mean to me as one Member of this small Legislature in our great country? And I come to the conclusion that it means four things. Firstly, and you can count on this, I believe, Canada forever will be partitioned, divided. If you want to talk about distinct society, it will be distinctly French and distinctly English. I believe deeply that Meech Lake will partition our nation forever.

And I also believe that if you give, secondly, Quebec a special status to engage in the preservation and promotion of itself as a distinct society, both home and abroad, if you give those added powers that no other provinces will have, we are heading towards the notion of a country within a country.

Thirdly, I believe that Canada will become an association of states with a country that has the only, that has no effect, no power, is an empty, hollow shell.

And, fourthly, I believe that this deal causes Ottawa to surrender important powers in terms of immigration, social and economic areas, the Senate, the Supreme Court and the Provinces having veto over future constitutional reform. Decentralization will become the order of the day when the center is weakened. The inevitable result, Mr. Speaker, will be that strong provinces will become stronger, and weaker Provinces will weaken even more. So I say to you that a strong central government can safeguard the dreams and the hopes and the aspirations of the smaller and weaker provinces. Meech Lake deals the soul of this nation to ten separate states, with the stronger being given the larger portions.

Mr. Speaker, I voted against Meech Lake in 1988, when it was first presented to our Legislature. I sat where the hon. Member for St. John's East sits now - in Opposition. In fact, at that time I introduced an amendment to Meech Lake calling for the recognition of Newfoundland and Labrador as a distinct society. My hope was not to gain entrenchment for our Province as a distinct society, so much as to cause Meech Lake to be killed in its tracks. Because I believed then as I do now, as I did earlier this year when I voted for rescission of the Accord, that this is a poor deal, poorly constructed, poorly presented and poorly handled from beginning to end.

Mr. Speaker and hon. members, the

dictionary has a simple definition of confederation. It says it is something that is unified in a league. It is a compact, a coming together. It says it is a banding together of peoples. The common thread of the definition is common ground; seeking and finding and moving toward common ground. In light of these definitions, Mr. Speaker, let us look at Quebec's five demands more closely. The explicit recognition of distinct society; a guarantee of increased powers in matters of immigration; a limitation on Federal spending power; the recognition of a right of veto on constitutional matters; and Provincial participation in appointments of judges to the Supreme Court.

On the matter of immigration first, I believe, and I believe many members here also believe, that people who come to Canada from other lands come here to participate in one Canada, one great nation. But because of Meech lake, any Province now can receive immigrants at any time. In the case of Quebec, for example, who insisted on this particular clause in this particular amendment, this Province, by its own statutes, recognizes one official language, French, within the confines of its own Province. Yet our Canadian laws and the Charter recognizes Canada to function and have two official languages, French and English, under section 16 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. But, now, provincial officials in Quebec, by way of this amendment, they can cause immigrants to come in and tell them that they are living in a country that has only one official language where in fact, Mr. Speaker, there is true recognition of a bilingual nation, a nation with two official

languages.

But Quebec, which now constitutes and will constitute a distinct society, is different than other parts of Canada, so that, as many have said many times, provincial patriotism is strengthened under this section, while Canadian nationalism, the greater good of the nation, is weakened. So under this segment, Mr. Speaker, I submit to you and to hon. members, that this particular part of the Accord causes a great and swift watering down of Canada as a nation.

Once these amendments are ratified, there is no going back, Mr. Speaker. The parts become stronger than the total. Instead of ten speaking as one, instead of ten Provinces speaking as one country, Canada, Meech Lake gives us one Province as though it were one of ten separate countries. A community of communities, I believe Joe Clark called it during his leadership days, and again as Prime Minister. A community of communities. Not one community, a community of communities. Ten separate distinct and unique parts, all moving in their own direction with no common thread, no confederation, no unification, no banding together, no common ground, Mr. Speaker.

Any immigrant to a Province of Canada is still an immigrant to Canada, but under this provision the Provinces control that; they look after it, they determine who comes in and who does not, when, in fact, we all know that immigration is singularly and solely the job of the country as a whole, of the nation, as one complete nation.

Mr. Speaker, quickly with respect

to the spending power provision. Imagine a province opting out of a national program and being compensated to carry out a similar program that meets national standards. I think, Mr. Speaker, and I may be wrong, but I think the pork barrels would be opened in a lot of provinces. We wonder sometimes, and we wondered when we were in Opposition, whether education dollars being transferred were going to education, or were they going to water and sewer projects for votes for elections to keep comfortable people in their jobs? So we wondered that out loud, and we wondered whether money transferred from the nation was actually reaching its destination. If you look at it, Section 36 of The Constitution Act, 1982, provides for the promotion of equal opportunities, and it provides for the reduction of regional disparity. So how does restricting Federal spending power under Meech Lake affect this particular section of the Constitution, Section 36, dealing with regional disparities? Because opting out of shared-cost programs will ultimately lead to a checkerboard Canada, let's not kid ourselves about that. Some will be in, some will be out, some will be compensated, some will not be compensated. Imagine the application of this principle, if you will for a minute, Mr. Speaker, to the Medicare program that we all currently enjoy in this nation. I recognize that this provision affects only new programs, but reflect for a moment. This principle applied to Medicare, checkerboard medicine, one level of service on the northwest coast of the Northern Peninsula and St. Barbe is quite another level of service in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, or

Outlook, Saskatchewan, or Montreal, Quebec. A sure sign of a weakness within this Accord is to say that a province could opt out of a national program as long as it abides by national standards. What are national standards? Where are the checks and balances in this limitation on Federal spending power at the provincial level? Who will come and check? Who will see that money is truly directed where it is said to have been directed?

Mr. Speaker, that brings me to my third point, and it is probably, for me and for most members, the most important point in this document, Quebec as a distinct society. It is an historical and sociological fact that Quebec is a distinct society. Everybody on this side of the House has recognized that, most speakers to date on that side have recognized it, as well. But we say put the distinct society clause in the preamble to the Constitution, not into the body of the resolution. Because we have to understand something, Mr. Speaker. Distinct, whether we like it or agree or not, means individual, separate, different.

What Meech Lake is saying in other terms is that, yes, Canada is Canada, she is a strong country, everybody is equal, but maybe, just maybe, some people may be more equal than others. Because the recognition of Quebec as a distinct society says that Canada is one but Quebec is individual, separate, different, it is special. It passes to it, Mr. Speaker, as many members have reflected and talked about today, from Constitutional lawyers across the country, a special status on Quebec. And under this particular clause in this amendment, which,

in my view, fractures Canada in the long run, can we continue to say, Mr. Speaker, that all Canadians are equal, where there is a constitutional recognition in this document that one piece of Canada is to be treated differently from another piece of Canada?

Does it not logically follow that the Constitution will have to be interpreted in two ways? And this is the argument many Canadians put forward, one way for Quebec and one way for the rest of the country. Because Quebec under Meech Lake will be different, distinct, separate, special, be treated differently under the fundamental law of the land. But it will also, interestingly enough - I heard Premier Peterson this morning say that if they want distinct let them have distinct, if they want to be distinct, it doesn't affect us. That is not quite true. Because, to say that somebody is special is to say that somebody else is not special, and therein is the other side. And they can tut, tut all they want, but the argument has to be brought out that if you are prepared to stand and say one is special, the flip side of that argument is that somebody is not special. And that is what we are asking for with respect to the distinct society and clarification of that clause.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that fundamentally Canadians will not be playing on a level playing field. I believe, as many do, that the distinct society will eliminate equality. And whether, Mr. Speaker, people want to admit it or not, this Accord will create two solitudes in Canada, two separate entities; it will create, I believe, a partition through our country. And Meech Lake, I

believe, says forget the oneness, the greatness, the strength of this wonderful great land, Canada, French Canada will be its way and English Canada will be its way, and each, on their own, will pretend to be together. That is what I believe Meech Lake says.

Mr. Speaker, we only have twenty minutes, is that correct?

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Furey: I will skip over a few points that I did want to make.

An Hon. Member: By leave!

Mr. Furey: But I want to say this, Mr. Speaker, that during the debate on the rescinding motion in April of this year, here in our Legislature, I said that I believed Premier Peckford and his Government, in 1988, passed a resolution on Meech Lake, by either being devious or by not understanding the contents of Meech Lake. And I have heard some members opposite say, why are you not holding public hearings? Why is there not public debate? - when they, themselves, when they sat on this side of the Chamber, Mr. Speaker, introduced the resolution, said no to public hearings, allowed limited debating time, twenty hours I believe, and then caused a vote to happen. So I say, and I say this honestly, that they passed it by either being devious or by not understanding the resolution themselves. You can only conclude that they either blindly passed the resolution totally void of any understanding of its future ramifications for this country, or they passed a resolution in a limited twenty hour debate, knowing its future ramifications but not wanting the people to know.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Furey: But there is a third category. There is the devious category and the category of ignorance, but there is a third category, Mr. Speaker, and it is the category of innocence. There is another category that I reserve for a few members who sat in this Legislature as Government Members and voted for Meech Lake. And I say to them that I know they understood what Meech Lake meant, and I say to them that I believe they understood the ramifications but innocently believed there was no other way. And any member who currently sits in this Legislature who falls into the category of innocence, now has a chance to change and vote against Meech Lake. The innocent now have their moment in history to make an important correction during a free vote, sanctioned by both party leaders, to vote their conscience, and they must mix together intellect, their heart, and the voices of their constituents to come to a reasonable, logical, honest conclusion.

Mr. Speaker, a great writer once wrote that courage is grace under pressure. I want to say publicly to my Premier that I believe that definition aptly suits him. If I could say one man in one very trying, almost terrifying set of circumstances, for seven days, fifteen hours a day displayed grace under pressure, I would say it was Premier Wells of Newfoundland.

And, Mr. Speaker, when I think of the original Fathers of Meech Lake, I wonder, on that fateful night as they sat through the wee hours of the morning in Langevin Block, whether it was their dried voices that whispered together

quiet and meaningless, meaningless as wind in dry grass. And I say, as I said when I began this talk, is there a future for Canada? That is the question that has to be asked by all of us, even those laughing on the other side, about the issue. Is there a future for Canada? As the Member for St. John's East laughs, is there a future for Canada?

Canada has, Mr. Speaker, a very bright and very beautiful future, in my humble opinion. French and English on common, equal ground, unafraid of the cowards on both sides of the issue who draped themselves in flags of convenience. I believe it is incumbent upon us to strip away the flags from them and show them for the naked, hollow men they are in this debate. And, Mr. Speaker, I think of nothing else in this debate -

An Hon. Member: Men?

Mr. Furey: Men and women in this debate. Thank you for correcting me. Men and women in this debate. If nothing else, Mr. Speaker, we have to pull away those flags they draped themselves in. I think we owe at least that much to our country, Canada. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

Mr. Doyle: Mr. Speaker, seeing that it is close to six o'clock, maybe I will adjourn the debate until eight o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: By agreement, the House is adjourned until 8:00 p.m.



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VERBATIM REPORT
(Hansard)

Speaker: Honourable Thomas Lush

The House resumed at 8:00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Baker: Motion 3, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Doyle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased indeed to have the opportunity tonight to speak in this debate, and let me say at the outset as well, that I was extremely pleased, and I was extremely happy to have had the opportunity today to hear Premier Frank McKenna and Premier David Peterson address the Newfoundland House of Assembly. And I am extremely pleased and happy that they agreed to be here because, if I ever had even a modicum of doubt as to where I would vote on this particular issue, I think that doubt was probably effectively dispelled today. And we are extremely fortunate, Mr. Speaker, in this country to have people of the stature of David Peterson and Frank McKenna to express their thoughts to all of us in such a practical and such a convincing, and clear and compassionate way. Having Peterson and McKenna here today, to speak to us, gave me, I believe, a very small appreciation, a very small appreciation of what went on around the table back in 1987 at Meech Lake. And again what the dynamics probably were in Ottawa a couple of weeks ago. So, Mr. Speaker, I am extremely pleased to have heard these people speak to us today.

This is in my view, a very historic day for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. And there are seldom occasions in this

Legislature when we can point to so many people in the galleries, and so many people have so much interest in this particular issue. And what we are seeing of course and what it is an indication of, is a public who are reasonably aware of the seriousness of the issue. A public who are becoming increasingly aware that we are today, here in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, turning a page in our development as a country. And the decisions that we make here over the next couple of days will not only dictate how we live in the present, but will probably dictate how we are going to live for the next hundred years in this country of Canada.

The last number of days for me personally have been a period of assessment and reassessment, and I can personally identify with the speech given today by the Member for St. John's West, in which he cited instances within his own constituency, indeed within his own family, where people were divided and torn apart on this particular issue. I have listened attentively and with a great deal of interest to those I represent, as they came to me over the last number of days to give me their views in a very honest and in a very caring manner. And if my constituents are any indication, as I feel they are, I believe the people in our Province, and in our country, are today very fearful, but not only are they very fearful, they are very confused as well. They are confused that there could be so many different points of view on one single issue. And they are confused as well that there are so many experts in the country with so many differing views on the issue as well. They cannot understand,

and I cannot understand, how just ten small provinces in Canada, and when I say small, I mean in terms of population, we are only a country of twenty-five or twenty-six million people, they find it difficult to understand how ten provinces in the country cannot find common ground, and cannot live in mutual respect and harmony. And, of course, I have not been able to offer them a sound reason for all of the disagreement that is going on in the country today, except to say that what the Premier said, and what the Prime Minister said a couple of weeks ago: when you are engaged in the process of trying to build a country, then it is very, very difficult to unite, and it is a whole lot easier to break apart and tear it down.

I have to compliment the Premier on his efforts over the last couple of months, in particular, and I compliment him on his resolve that a better way has to be found to ensure public involvement in the constitutional amending procedure. This has been a process that everyone in the country is saying we should not have been put through and that we should never be put through again. And I believe that if there is one thing that we can all point to as having caused some damage, that caused a sense of mistrust in our political leaders, then it has to be the manner in which the Agreement was arrived at. But as Premier Peterson said today, it was a procedure that was inherited, it was not one that was created by the people who went to Ottawa last week, or a couple of weeks ago. And people are always very, very suspicious of the result of an event that is conceived or contrived behind closed doors.

And last night when I walked into my son's bedroom, I saw a poster on the wall and everybody seems to be quoting today, it seems to be a good time for quoting, when you are talking about a constitution, but I saw a poster on the wall, that caught my attention last night. It was about a two by two poster, that had a picture of Albert Einstein on it, and the quote at the bottom of the picture said, 'all of us who are concerned for peace and triumph of reason and justice, have to be keenly aware how small an influence reason and honest goodwill exert upon events in the political field'. And that made me think for a moment, he was probably thinking of politicians and how they make very very important decisions behind closed doors. And I believe that all of our political leaders in this country want to exert an honest goodwill upon events in the political field, however, events in the last couple of weeks indicate it cannot be done in a secretive manner. It cannot be done behind closed doors. Some of it undoubtedly has to be done behind closed doors, but a lot of it has to be done within the public forum, if people are to fully understand the decisions that are being made on their behalf.

I have talked to a great number of my constituents over the last number of days, and they have mixed emotions about the Meech Lake Accord, and they have very cautious views on Meech Lake. They feel like most people that it is not a perfect document, and we have heard that so many, many times in the House. They feel, like most people, a sense of concern, but at the same time they are fearful that the country could break apart if Quebec is not given

the opportunity to become a full participating member in Confederation. I share that concern and I share that view as well. There is cause for a great deal of fear. Every member of the House has come under a great deal of pressure over the last number of days. They have been lobbied like they have never been lobbied before, by both the pro Meech and the anti Meech people. And if you have learned one thing, and if you have learned anything at all during that process, you have to be keenly aware that the mood, not only in Canada, but in Newfoundland today, is very tense, and is strained to the breaking point. And just like all of the great Confederation debates, it too has divided the families of Newfoundland, and again I have to refer to the Member for St. John's West in what he said about his own particular family being divided and having different views on the Meech Lake Accord.

But now, Mr. Speaker, I think it is time to put all of that aside and we have to recognize the legitimate aspirations and legitimate concerns of the people of Quebec to find a place in our Constitution. No one can argue and no one would dare argue that the Accord does not have a few shortcomings. But if we as a Province are truly come of age, then we have to ask ourselves if these shortcomings are more important than the need for all of us as Canadians to put behind us the unresolved dispute that we are into right now that has consumed the political agenda of Canada for the last twenty years. And it has, it is an event that has consumed the political agenda of Canada over the last twenty year period.

And the unfortunate thing about the whole event is that in the last three years the Accord has, unfortunately, become the political symbol. And now if we here in this Legislature are to reject the Meech Lake Accord, then we symbolically reject the people of Quebec, and what we are doing by the same token is inviting people of Quebec to reject Canada. I for one, Mr. Speaker, am very fearful of this Province and the country if that should happen. And we should all be fearful, because we are told that we would be faced, and I believe that was made graphically clear to us today by both Premiers who spoke to us, that we would be faced with economic and political consequences far more burdensome for the Province than we would be able to cope with. And we cannot afford to play Russian roulette with the country and we cannot afford to play Russian roulette with the Province.

It seems like the Meech Lake debate has consumed our being to the exclusion of everything else in Newfoundland and Labrador. I think now is the time to put Meech Lake behind us and welcome Quebec into the country as a full participating member and to shift the focus onto the issues that are of paramount importance to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, issues like unemployment, the fishery, and the many other issues which affect the every day lives of the ordinary Newfoundlanders. And it is a real eye opener, Mr. Speaker, to do a telephone survey or a door to door in your constituency to find out how they are feeling on different issues.

On the Meech Lake issue it was an eye opener as well. I found that

people would respond to the issue when they were asked questions about it directly, they would freely tell you what they felt. But I was also, I do not know how other members found it, but I was also given the message that was loud and clear as well. The message was we believed that the points on the Meech Lake system have been made and made very well by the Premiers and by our own Premier also. Now for heaven's sake get back to work and see what can be done to resolve the crippling unemployment problems that we have in the country. You have people asking you some very, very basic questions; where am I going to get work this summer? Meech Lake is important, but how do I cope with the fact that I have not worked in six months, and I am back three mortgage payments on my house, and I am being foreclosed on by the bank. That is what I have heard from a lot of people who phoned me. Incidentally I had forty-six calls dealing with the Meech Lake Accord up until yesterday morning, forty-six calls in total. They would say we called to tell you that we have a lot of concern about Meech Lake, and by the way do you think Hibernia is going to start this summer? That would be the crux of the conversation. We called to tell you that we have a great deal of concerns about Meech Lake and, by the way, is Hibernia going to start this summer? This is what people are thinking, and this is what people want answers to. And Newfoundlanders are not the only people who are thinking that way.

Mr. Speaker, I think we have to do what our constituents sent us here to do and that is to use our best judgment to make a decision that is in the best interest of the

people who elected us and whom we represent, and then get onto the issues that affect the ordinary people in Newfoundland. Some of us are going to be influenced undoubtedly and guided by the message that has been given to us over the last number of days by our constituents, and rightly so, because we have the responsibility to reflect their views. However, I do not think we should ever forget, and I think Premier Peterson reminded us of it today, we should never forget as well that we also have a far greater responsibility to the people who elected us to this Chamber, and that is to demonstrate leadership and to use our best judgment on their behalf.

I also share the views of the Member for Grand Bank with respect to the future economic development of this Province should the Meech Lake Accord fail. If that future economic development is affected by the tearing apart of the country, as I think it will be, then I am today making a decision that will not only affect my children, but will affect my children's children as well. And again I refer to Premier Peterson. I think he said it better than any of us could ever, he said, 'Passage of the Meech Lake Accord may not have the affect of keeping Quebec within Confederation for all times. But what it will do is offer a period of stability within the country so that the other issues can be effectively dealt with.' So I believe we have to get on with the process of welcoming Quebec into the Canadian family, and I think we have to recognize their uniqueness within Canada.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, as well that all of us would be far better

off if we were to extend the hand of friendship to Quebec, rather than finding ourselves in the history books in a few years from now as being the only Province in Canada to reject the notion of a full Canadian family. In the final analysis I believe it comes down to whether or not we have the trust and we have the respect and we have the statesmanship to move forward as a united people, and having said that I want to make it perfectly clear, Mr. Speaker, that when the vote is taken on the Meech Lake Accord I will be voting for.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Social Services.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Efford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I have sat in the House of Assembly for the last several hours today and I have listened with great interest to colleagues from both sides. I have listened to their individual views, their personal views, I have listened to their ideas and the comments they put forward on behalf of their constituents. I have listened with great interest to the Premier of Ontario and the Premier of New Brunswick. In fact, I must say without a doubt it is an eye opener to listen to the comments and it gives me great concern about the process we are going through and the decision that we have to make for the future, in listening to the other side and the ideas of some other people. I am especially grateful to the Premier in taking the foresight of inviting these people to come to our Chambers and to

speak to us.

I must say in the few minutes that I have to speak on behalf of, I guess, the people in the District of Port de Grave, to try to express my own views on behalf of those people, and at the same time try to express their views, taking in the future of Canada.

I must say, Mr. Speaker, I don't know if I was as deeply concerned or as nervous about any process or any speaking engagement I have had to do in the last twenty-five years. I can only think of one other time that I was equally as nervous as I am this evening, and that was when I first joined the Lions Club in the Town of Bay Roberts, and it was the first time I rose to my feet to speak in a public forum. My two knees at that particular time were knocking and I can sincerely say now, that with the great concern that I have for the Province, the great concern I have for the country, I feel equally those same feelings which I held that evening when I was trying to utter a few words to the people in the audience.

It is not a decision, and I never thought I would be placed in the position in the House of Assembly, where, I would rise to my feet and not be political, but this is not the time to be political. This is not the time to be political. It is not the time to talk about the politics of one party or another.

When I talked to the people in my District like I have over the last several days and several weeks, and spoke to people who have genuinely deep concerns about the process, about Meech Lake, and I must say that I was impressed at the knowledge that they have of the Meech Lake Accord. I was

very, very impressed. But even with the great knowledge and understanding they have of the Meech Lake Accord, I can understand deeper the greater concern that they have for the Province and for the country. And if you want to talk about the concern and separate it into different age groups, you get totally different views.

I sat on the wharf last Monday morning, a place where I like to go sometimes to relax, to get away from the pressure and to have some clear thinking, and one gentleman who is about sixty-five years old, sat down on what we call the gump on the wharf and chatted with me about the Meech Lake Accord, and we chatted about Newfoundland and Labrador. We talked about what's happening in the process. We talked not about the individual clauses, not the fact that Quebec was going to be a distinct society, not the fact that Quebec was going to have special powers over immigration or in appointing three judges. That was not the issue.

He referred it to before Confederation because he remembered what took place when the vote came about on Confederation. How church was pitted against church. How community was pitted against community, and how people were pitted against people, because of their strong views, either for or against Confederation. He said, John, think about it, it's happening not only in the community but now it is happening in the nation.

That awakened me. It showed me and gave me a better insight, because we may talk about the politicians and the people who are

doing the radical things, like the separatists, the few separatists in Quebec, but we are all one people in Canada. Cut our veins and the same blood comes out of all of us. We may speak a different language. We may feel a little more pride in our culture. We may feel a little more pride in protecting our language rights, but we are a country of a great nation of people, and we are distinct. The whole nation, the whole nation is distinct, and we like to protect ourselves.

I refer to the amalgamation process. When I talked about amalgamation in my district, the community of Cupids and the community of Brigus, said, I don't want to amalgamate, I want to protect my culture. I want to protect the identity of Brigus, and they were very strong on it. I have no problems with saying that. It was the fear of the unknown that somebody was going to tread and take something away from them. Canada is made up of that, but that is not to say that the process is right or wrong. I am talking about the thoughts within some of the peoples' minds, and that is what is taking place today in Canada.

I must say over the last four or five years, and especially over the last four or five days and weeks, that I myself learned a great deal about the Meech Lake Accord, and probably I would even go back as far to say that when I voted in the opposition, I didn't understand the process of what was taking place in Canada. I never dreamed, beyond my wildest imaginations, that it could possible come to where we would be making a decision whether the country was going to stay united or break apart.

I have tried to put all of those concerns to the people in my District. I spoke last night in a public forum in the Bay Arena and I tried to give them both sides of the argument, because I wanted them to be aware of what could possibly take place. I didn't want to threaten people. I don't think for one second that Quebec will leave Canada. I have a lot more confidence in the nation of Canada, but I believe that things could happen, consequences could happen out of this, and the worst consequence, the worst that could possibly happen would be, people against people.

People say, well why, why must it happen? Why must people fight against people, when we are living in a nation so great? We are the envy of the whole world. Every other nationality, every other race, every other people all over the world is scrabbling to get into this country. Why? Because we have the respect of the whole world for the way in which we live. For the independence which we have in ourselves, for the freedom which we have, for the opportunities which are in this country, for the health system, for the social programs, for the education programs, for the freedom to speak out as we are doing here in this public forum, without being shoved into a prison, without our rights being taken away from us. We are a nation of greatness.

Where do we come from? We came from all other parts of the world. All other nationalities came in and made up this country, and it is still happening. We will have to pray to God that it will still continue to happen. We have to make it happen. We have to allow it to happen.

I do not want to have tell the people of Port de Grave District that Canada is going to break up. I believe that Canada will survive, I believe that no matter what happens over the next several days and what happens on Friday, I think Canada will survive. We have come through two great world wars. We came through Confederation. There was fighting and arguing on both sides, and we have come through a lot of problems since that and we have survived. I believe we will survive again, but, how long can we go on in this country arguing and fighting over who should speak a language, afraid that somebody else is going to have a little more power, be a little more aggressive.

I would like to believe that we have the freedom to do that and it bothers me a great deal when I talk to the people on the streets and the people in my District and find the greatest fear they have of the Meech Lake Accord being approved, is the fact that some province will hold great powers over them and tell them how to live their daily lives. And that's wrong. They shouldn't have that fear.

Equally, I agree as the Premier of New Brunswick stated today, about the fear of the economic consequences of what will happen if the Meech Lake Accord is not approved on Friday. I don't think the decision should be based on those sorts of ideas and feelings. To tell people that they are going to lose an economic base. To tell people that they are going to lose their security. I don't think it should happen that way.

It is a possibility. Anything is

a possibility, a probability, but I don't believe it. In my heart and soul, I don't believe it is going to happen. I have to make the decision and I wish to God I didn't have to do it on Friday. Probably it is a little bit of cowardice, the yellow streak coming out in me, and I don't mind admitting it, I am scared of whatever way I vote when the time comes to vote in this House of Assembly.

I am going to have an awful lot of questions which I will be going over in my mind afterwards - did I do the right thing? Because it is not going to be identified next week and it's not going to be identified next month. It is going to be a long time in the future before the reality of that vote will be known. Probably it will be my children or grandchildren or my great grandchildren, who will be able to look back and say that their grandfather made that awful decision, or probably that he made that right decision, and that's what really scares me because it's the future, it's their future that we are talking about.

It's not down anymore to whether Bourassa, whether Mulroney, whether Clyde Wells, whether McKenna or Peterson is trying to score some political points, or where somebody is trying to make a political name for themselves. It is down on the future of the nation. It is down on the future of our people. It is right in the palm of our hands and we now have the responsibility to decide on that. Can I read this particular document, the Meech Lake Accord, or read the letters from constituents, file letter after letter that has been written, read the articles in the newspapers and

read all the different ideas, because I can tell you now, for every single argument you can put up four there could be 10,000 to 1 against. And every single argument you put up against there will be the same counter arguments. There is not one person who has spoken in this House of Assembly today that I could not counter argue and give you a dozen different reasons that he or she is wrong, or at the same time that he or she is right if some of the things they spoke about was negative.

As Premier McKenna spoke about this afternoon, I could counter argument after he said it and give my own ideas. Who is going to tell me? Who is going to guarantee that my ideas, Mr. Speaker, are right? And that is the dilemma that I am into and I am sure it is no different with every individual sitting down in this House of Assembly. I am not pointing at the opposition or the opposition is not pointing at me anymore and trying to score a political point. It is not that way at all. I thought about the gentleman I referred to a few minutes ago, who was sitting down on that wharf, and he told me about how he lived and his family lived before confederation, and he told me his grandmother received seven dollars every month - there was no such thing as old age security as we know it today. People lived through their initiative to survive off the land and off the ocean, and the people had no medical and no education process and they wanted to join Canada. I was only a child at the time, but they wanted to join this great country of Canada. Why? To take advantage, to be part of a great nation that could come together and unite and give all

these things to the people, that we could work together and we could build a great nation together.

And remembering the feeling that was in his eyes and the feeling that was in his heart when he told me this, I could relate as if I were there going through the suffering that they went through, and the pride that they have now in that great country, in this great country of Canada. And it made me even more conscientious of the responsibility that is placed upon me, because you must expand that to hundreds and thousands of people in this Province, and millions of people in this country. He was not the only one who lived like that. Hundreds and thousands and millions of people lived like that. But it gives me a greater sense of responsibility knowing now when I vote, I will have to make a decision that will be best for those people and will not revert them back to the way in which they used to live, and I do not mean just in poor economic times but I mean in a country that is not united. I have to make my vote and to place my vote and to place my responsibility in that direction to keep this great nation together. And what do I do? Do I look at the clauses in the Accord? Do I look at the fact that somebody will have a few more advantages over somebody else as far as immigration or as far as the distinct society clause goes. Do I weigh the possibilities of those things tearing apart the nation, because it was even said today, even if the Meech Lake Accord is ratified or signed, Canada will still break up and that really bothers me. Probably we should be putting our direction into more conciliation, more talking, opening up to the French

people on an individual basis. Probably that is what we should be doing, letting the lawyers and letting the experts deal with the clauses and the knowledge and the expertise, because I do not have the knowledge of the Meech Lake Accord that I should have. I do not have the legal mind to deal with all the clauses.

But probably the people like myself and like most of us in this hon. House of Assembly, should be extending a warm welcome to the individuals in Quebec and making them feel a part of things and make them feel we are not rejecting them with our thoughts, we are not rejecting them with our actions, but we are asking to bring us all together to keep this great nation in place. I mean the thought of Canada breaking up, the thought, just the thought really scares me. It really disturbs me. Could we ever possibly imagine that something like that could happen to this great nation? No. We should not even let it come in our minds. We should do everything within our human powers to see that it does not happen. Probably the Meech Lake Accord should be just forget about completely and all of our interests and all of our desire and determination to unite Canada should be in another direction as far as the citizens of this nation are concerned. Some people said, well they are going to go anyhow. Probably they are, but I referred to it last night: if you had three children in your family and one of them was of different views and hard to manage and hard to deal with and he or she decided to leave, would you just let him go? Would you just be satisfied for him to walk away and to forget him, or would you try to keep the family together? Would you do

everything possible within your human powers, within your love of your family to keep that person, that child within your family? I think we would. Well, why should we be any different in our nation? Why would we and why should we be any different in our nation? Why shouldn't we do everything in our powers to keep this great nation together? And that is the feeling that I have towards this nation.

I do not think that I am the only one who wants to keep this nation together. I have not placed myself on a pedestal. That is not what I am saying. I am expressing my views, and I believe that every individual in this hon. House of Assembly wants to do the same thing. The only thing I hope and pray to God is that we all get together and work for the same thing, and do not let our political views and our personal views and our personal discontent with some person in Ottawa or some politician, to stand in our way. Now the people of my District have said very clearly, John, you know the way I feel. You know the way we feel. And the vote last night: I think it was something like 85 per cent against the Meech Lake Accord, and they are asking me to carry that vote to the House of Assembly. I am saying to them, do you understand the reality once you make that vote, there is no turning back? You are asking me to go in to stand in the House of Assembly. Now when I stand and I place my vote Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or anytime in the future, I cannot take that vote back. Do you understand the responsibility that you are placing on my shoulders? And that is the dilemma that I am into. Do you understand what could possibly happen with the outcome of this?

I do not know, probably the damage is already done. Probably the people in Quebec and the people in other parts of Canada feel the discontent that has been built up over the last few weeks is probably unrepairable. That has crossed my mind. I think I have changed my mind and come up with so many different angles and so many different realities in logic over the last four or five days that it has frightened me. And it seems like everybody I talk to, even going out to supper this evening driving out and sitting down having supper, the people's conversations, my friends, you change your mind and you wonder if the right thing is being done. So, Mr. Speaker, I cannot add any comfort to anybody's mind and it is not my job to do because this is an individuals vote. I can only express the views that I feel about this great nation, that we have come a long way and we have come through a lot of hardships and we have survived, and I think that we owe it to each other to stand together and to survive into the future. No country, no unit, nobody, can survive separated or divided. Nothing can survive. It is like a ship with half it's crew leaving because of some discontent in the past days, that ship cannot sail, cannot go over the ocean, it must be guided with manpower and with unity. There is nothing any different. We can take all sorts of scenarios. So, Mr. Speaker, my concerns are very, very sincere and very, very deep. I am going to speak honestly, and I suppose the people of my district will hear what I am going to say over the news media, and the TV cameras this evening, but I cannot honestly, because of my great concern for this nation, I cannot honestly tell the people tonight what I am going to do on Friday.

I am going to have to listen, and I am going to have to weigh my conscience, and I am going to have to look in the mirror and look at the future of Canada, as well as the future of Newfoundland, and especially the future of the people in my District, and my children and my grandchildren, as to what is best for this nation. I am going to wrestle with it between now and when the time comes on Friday, but all I hope and pray, Mr. Speaker, is that I will have the courage and I will have the insight and the foresight to do what is best for this country come Friday.

Thank you, very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Mount Scio - Bell Island.

Mr. Walsh: Mr. Speaker, I apologize. I have been running back and forth most of the day and I automatically assumed we would be doing the exact same thing. I thank the Member for Fogo for relinquishing his time to me.

I would like to begin by thanking two people in this Legislature who have made this process possible. I would like to thank the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition. Both gentlemen have given us the right to exercise a free vote in this Legislature and I commend both of them for that decision. I would like to start with a quote from the Manitoba Task Force on Meech Lake. This one paragraph somewhat sums up what I feel and what a lot of us believe. It does not say who the individual is, it simply says, one presenter explained. Canada has come to stand for something in this world, something simple yet multifaceted

and infinitely worthwhile. Canada promises justice, freedom, equality, and mutual respect, and I am proud to be one of those to whom the promise is made, as well one of those charged with fulfilling this promise to other Canadians. Mr. Speaker, to me, Canada is and must continue, a nation of people and not a nation of provinces, a nation of people that consist of all of us, all of us with many languages, many backgrounds, and many nationalities, not a country of well defined borders but a country of people. It must also, Mr. Speaker, have a strong Federal Government, a strong centre that we can all rally around and know full well that they, not only as a Federal Government respect the rights and wishes of the people of this country, but also ensures that the rights and wishes of this country are met. That strong Federal Government should be required to lead the shaping of our Constitution in an non-partisan manner, and, Mr. Speaker, also with strict attention to the wishes of all the peoples of Canada, as well, Mr. Speaker, to the desires of Canada's territorial and provincial governments.

Mr. Speaker, although I have concerns for certain items that exist in the Meech Lake Accord I also have very strong concerns for items that are not in the Accord. I feel very strongly, Mr. Speaker, that the Assembly of First Nations, or the peoples who were a part of this country long before our ancestors arrived from Europe, are not addressed. I also have great concern, Mr. Speaker, for 52 per cent of our population which has been excluded, and that is the women of this country.

Today we heard two eloquent speeches from two Premiers of our country. Premier Peterson referred to unity of purpose as fundamental to this Canada we live in, but, Mr. Speaker, unity of purpose must represent all Canadians, French, English, aboriginal, and the rights of the women, who as I said, represent 52 per cent of our country. It has been said also, here in our Assembly today, that in the last three years there has been a change of mood in our country, a change of mood that was brought on by the change of governments. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that there has not really been a change of mood, rather than there has been a realization of the errors that currently exist in the Meech Lake Accord. It bothers me no end when I hear us, and our federal politicians, equating the failure of Meech Lake with the separation of Quebec. That is to misrepresent the situation, to cast Meech as an instrument of national unity without giving the opportunity to the people, the 26 million people of this country, to express their views is wrong, therefore we cannot refer to it as an instrument of national unity. The debate is not to say, yes, or, no, to Canada. This is just too simplistic a view. It is not, yes, or no, to Canada. The Meech Lake Accord is first and foremost nothing more than a legal document that allows us to move from Point A to Point B. The problem being faced in two Legislatures today, both in Manitoba and here in this Province, is that something happened between A and B. It is almost referring to the numerical numbers of one and one as only two. Those who are computer oriented would tell you that maybe one and one is eleven. Something happened on our way from A to B.

Mr. Speaker, for me Canada promises the best of what every country of this world represents, a country of people from all walks of life, from all nationalities, and from all nations of this world, who came together to form what we call Canada. Last Friday evening my daughter, Pamela, frustrated doing homework about Meech Lake, wanted some help, and I addressed some of the basic questions except one. The one question we had the most difficulty with was, how will your father and mother vote in the referendum? While trying to explain there would be no referendum she said, Dad, it does not matter, how will you vote? I said, Pamela, if I could answer that for you, now on Friday night, it would take a burden off my shoulders that I have had to carry for the last ten days or more. It has been a long weekend, Mr. Speaker. It has been a long weekend for me in terms of reaching out to talk to my constituents, asking them to spend Father's Day with me in a meeting hall on Bell Island, and coming out to talk to me and share their thoughts with me. Meetings with the business community, from which I come, on Sunday morning, hearing their views of what could happen to this country. But, uppermost in my mind at all times, was first and foremost my love of this country, and my love of the people of this country.

Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence, and the indulgence of all francophones across Canada, allow me to say, 'Aux citoyens du Quebec, permettez moi de vous dire: Vous etes une partie importante de ce pays appele le Canada. Je ne peux pas - je ne pourrais pas - accepte un Canada sans le peuple quebecois. Vous

etes aussi importants pour moi que ma propre famille . I am not sure if the French is Quebec but the translation says 'To the citizens of Quebec I say, you are important to this land called Canada. I cannot, I could not accept a Canada without the people of Quebec. You are as important to me as my family.' To me, Mr. Speaker, this is what Canada is all about.

The most hurting thing for me is the direction that I would look for leadership in this country has not been there. The Prime Minister of this country who should be out saying Canada means something and Canada must stay together has been just the opposite. He has gone into this country bringing the leadership of a bar room gambler and it hurts me so much because of that. When we as a Nation needs someone to gather around, not a Premier of any Province, the Prime Minister of this country that we need to rally around, he is not there. He is out telling me that my country may fall apart, people whom I care about in all parts of this country will separate. My God, Mr. Speaker, where is our Prime Minister? The leadership that he has shown in this situation, I for one will never forgive.

There have been other issues brought to the forefront, Mr. Speaker, and I regret more than anything that one question has been asked and asked by the Federal officials moreso than anyone else, the question is: How can a Province like Newfoundland that barely represents 2 per cent of this country hold up what is called the Meech Lake Accord? How can we? Mr. Speaker, we have every right to fight for what we believe in for this Province.

Because I say to my friends and family in Quebec you represent 2 per cent of the population of North America, please do not be mad with us because we fight so strongly for what we believe in for our Province as you do in an ocean of English speaking people. And to quote Premier Robert Bourassa who said, 'This country is not made up of ten provinces and fifty states.' He was concerned about the sixty states that evolved and live around Quebec. I ask the citizens of Quebec not to be mad with us, we are fighting for our 2 per cent, which represented 2 per cent of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, although we may not have, in some people's opinion, the right to say that Quebec cannot have something. We also do not have the right to leave out aboriginal Canadians and we do not have the right to leave out women. My heart and my prayers go out to Elijah Harper who has stood tall for his people. And by doing so he stood tall for all Canadians who believe that a Constitution must represent every issue or every person in this country, and to have the native people left out and to have women left out I cannot accept.

Mr. Speaker, rather than go on I want to end with the same paragraph that I began with, but the second part of it which reads like this 'We choose to define ourselves as a Nation, not in terms of commonality of language as our ancestors did, but because of a common desire to be together to share a fundamental level and way of life and a respect for individual differences.' This, Mr. Speaker, is what makes up Canada. I have no great desire, Mr. Speaker, to see the Meech Lake

Accord die, but, Mr. Speaker, I have a greater desire to see all Canadians, and in particular those of an aboriginal background, take their part, not only at the table for negotiations, but for once and for all to be recognized as true participants in this country that we call Canada. Mr. Speaker, it is for those reasons that when the vote is called, you, Sir, during division on Friday will ask for the 'Ayes' to stand, that I will remain in my seat, Mr. Speaker, because I believe so strongly in the things that have been left out of the Meech Lake Accord. Not as strongly as I do about the leadership of the Prime Minister which I tell you, Mr. Speaker, goes to the core of my bones, but because of the people who have been left out and the things that we could accomplish if we united together as a country representing all of our people.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Winsor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It too gives me a gut wrenching feeling to participate in this debate after listening to Premiers Peterson and McKenna today tell their version of the implications of rejection and failure of Meech Lake, and its implication for the country, and to have a sobering reflection on all of us this debate that we are engaged in now is, as the Minister of Social Services has said, 'transcends political party and political stripes.' It is not often that I

throw bouquets and accolades to the hon. Minister of Social Services on a partisan basis, but tonight I think in the hours of debate that I have heard him engaged in in this House, I think tonight was his finest hour because he kind of touched at the soul of the Nation and the country. It was just this week-end I had a similar opportunity to talk to a ninety year old man who had great concerns about what was going to happen to the country, he remembered what it was like prior to 1949, he knows what it has been like since, and he too had great concern about the future of this country.

There probably has been no debate in Newfoundland since 1949 or prior to 1949, the National Convention and leading up to it which has evoked such a response from Newfoundlanders. For most of my adult life I have witnessed this country experience one constitutional dilemma after another. These conflicts have torn at the very heart of Canada, and this latest one is threatening to be even worse. Since the 1960s and the early 1970s with the Victoria Formula 71, we have tried to effect constitutional change, each time we failed. After repeated attempts in 1971, 1974, 1976 and 1978, we failed to patriate the Constitution for Canada. Finally in the fall of 1980, the Federal Parliament introduced a resolution to unilaterally patriate the Constitution. This response evoked howls of protest from eight of the ten provinces and the Supreme Court of Canada eventually was forced to make a ruling.

Also at this time a new government, a separatist

government had gained power in Quebec, and despite all these problems we managed to patriate the Canadian Constitution. By 1982 The Constitution Act with its Charter of Rights and Freedoms had been put in place, but it did not contain Quebec's signature. Perhaps this was impossible, as no one could accept Mr. Levesque twenty-two demands that he wanted in the Constitution. In the meantime a referendum had been conducted in Quebec which had rejected sovereignty association by a 60/40 vote, in return Canadian parliamentarians promised renewed federalism and a new deal if Quebec rejected sovereignty association. The 1982 Constitution was proclaimed without Quebec's signature. That is why the Meech Lake Accord was often referred to as Quebec's round. In 1986-1987 serious discussion on accommodating Quebec into the constitutional family started. The list of demands had been reduced from twenty-two to five, and finally on April 30, 1990 the eleven governments, the ten provinces and the Federal Government, had agreed in principle on what later became known as the Meech Lake Accord.

Subsequently in the three year ratification process, political changes have occurred in this country that have brought on the dilemma we now experience. A Decima research poll found the following: there was a new sense of resentment and aggression surfacing; fair play and tolerance towards one another are no longer the rules of the game, and that was not the Canada that had been before, this was a new thing that was happening in Canada, we were no longer tolerant of one another.

In this three year period there has been a serious debate about both the content and the process of the Meech Lake Accord. I will look at the content later, but I think no one in this country can now support the process that led up to the Meech Lake Accord. Future constitutional changes must have greater public participation, if they are to win the support of Canadians for constitutional change. The process we witnessed over the past few days, and the seven days of the first Minister's meetings, cannot be the way of the future. The polls both Provincially and nationally indicate that far too many people do not really know what Meech Lake is about. It is a responsibility on both levels of government to inform Canadians, Newfoundlanders, Ontarians what Meech Lake was about and we failed miserably. In visiting my constituency over the past few days, that was the most expressed statement. That is wrong. How can we accurately ascertain the view of our constituents if they do not understand what they are being asked to give opinions on. Like my colleague from Grand Bank said earlier today, some were uncomfortable in discussing the Meech Lake Accord.

They want to express deep concerns about a fishery crisis that is now facing them. They wish that Meech Lake could be put to bed, one way or the other, so that their concerns can receive the attention that they justly deserves.

Perhaps one of the most alarming aspects all the week was the resentment of Quebec that I detected in my District, and indeed the Province. The few people who seemed to categorically reject Meech Lake admitted they

did not understand it, but rather did not trust or like Quebec. I am much afraid that what we are hearing in this Province is not anti Meech, but anti Quebec. That is the wrong reason for rejecting Meech Lake. With respects to the contents of the Accord itself, the overriding concern is that of a distinct society. What exactly does this involve, is the most frequently asked question. Does it give Quebec special status, that no other Canadians have? Constitutional experts throughout the country, for the most part, say no. It does not confer any special status or give Quebec any special powers. There is however, another body of opinion that refutes these claims. Who then does one believe? Section 24 of the Distinct Society Clause though, gives a large measure of comfort, since it states that nothing there negates from the power, rights or privileges of Parliament or the Government of Canada or Provincial Legislatures. If that is the case then, it is as Premier Peterson said, a clause applicable for Quebec only, and if it has such support in that Province, then we have no reason for such concerns.

On the issue of senate reform. There is no one in this country, who does not agree that senate reform is not necessary. Senate reform was first argued for by the Western Premiers who advanced the cause of a Triple E Senate for some time. While this present Accord does not achieve this measure, it at least puts it on the table for discussion. Assuming we were to have an elected and equal senate, can it be effective? More importantly for Newfoundland, how does this senate with new powers, solve the problems of economic disparity?

While there has been much talk about the senate solving our economic woes, no one has told us how this could be achieved. There is also concern that the unanimity clause restricts forever and a day the idea of senate reform. Can we or will we achieve senate reform if Quebec is not at the constitutional table? For me though, one of the significant aspects of the Meech Lake Accord is to have included in the next round of talks fisheries roles and responsibilities. With the tremendous resource problem our fishery is experiencing, it is imperative that we should have a say. All too often, in this session of this Legislature, we have heard our Minister of Fisheries state that the Federal Government was acting unilaterally, that they were not involving our Provincial Department of Fisheries in crucial decisions affecting the lives of Newfoundlanders, and that is wrong. No Newfoundlander, no politician, no provincial Legislature can see this most important industry being dictated to by the Federal Government without consultation and input from our Provincial Government.

This Province must have a say in its most vital resource, and if Meech Lake gives us that window of opportunity we should seize it. The big question that is being asked today throughout the country is - what if? What if Meech Lake fails? What will happen to this country? The Premier has said that he does not believe that it will lead to the breakup of this country. Others voice different opinions. When the referendum was conducted in 1980 I felt confident that Quebec would reject sovereignty association. I am not certain the same could be said

today, and I do not believe we can afford to take that risk.

Others speculate that separation is going to happen anyway. I cannot subscribe to that theory as legislators and Canadians, we should strive to ensure that this country remains united from sea to sea. The Premier has said that Meech Lake failure would probably create some short term economic difficulties. It could also create long term ones, the ramifications of which will be felt throughout this Province and country. In this uncertain political instability, how can we create economic opportunities for Newfoundland and for Canada? Can we expect confidence in the future development of Hybernia, Terra Nova, White Rose and others, if this political uncertainty continues?

The Lower Churchill Hydro Development will continue to be only a pipe dream, if we cannot solve the constitutional and political difficulties in this country. Economists and financiers all over this country, indeed the world, are watching Canada quite closely. They state unequivocally that high interest rates, a falling dollar, higher levels of unemployment and increased inflation, all will occur if Meech Lake is not ratified. This might be only short term, but can we take that risk? The prospect is even more alarming if one ponders the potential breakup of the country.

Since I was born after 1949, I was born a Canadian. While I owe a tremendous allegiance to this Province, I feel the same for my country. I want this country to remain a united one for us, for our children and those yet to be

born. We the legislators of this Province now potentially have the future of this country in our hands. The Meech Lake with all its flaws and shortfalls is the best we can achieve now. If it is flawed because of what it does not contain, as opposed to what it contains, then that is not a reason for rejection. We have other opportunities to build on the foundation now laid.

We as Canadians cannot go through the remainder of this decade and century, without some political stability. A failure to achieve constitutional and political peace, will tear apart the fabric of our society. I am reminded of a poem that I use to teach in high school, by John Dunn, entitled, "No Man Is An Island". In that poem one of the lines refers to the fact that if a clod be washed to the sea, then England is the lessor for it. If Quebec, a nation, a Province of seven million people, is taken from Canada, then Canada is a loser. I believe that we cannot afford that risk, and consequently I will on Friday, vote to accept the Meech Lake Accord.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!.

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

Mr. K. Aylward: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and make my comments in this debate tonight. I have been in politics for five years, I believe this to be probably the toughest decision that I as an individual will have to make, by far. As a matter of fact I am not sure if this decision would have to be faced by many other parliamentarians in the future, to the extent that we now face. And

a decision that we must make within a very short period of time. I have spent a number of days in my riding of Stephenville, and have consulted with the constituents who I know very well. I was born and bred in Stephenville and that area, so it was nothing new to go back and to talk with them about this issue.

But, you know, in doing that you get an appreciation for the way people feel about it and also for their view of what we have been doing, and their view of how Newfoundland fits into confederation, and it was most interesting. It was a bit of an eye opener for me actually because at the end of the five or six days you are left with two views. One view is that you have been on the right course, stay on that course and keep it up because many people, as a matter of fact 95 per cent of the people, said that our Government and Premier Wells has done superbly and has put forward the case of most Canadians as a matter of fact. Not just people of this Province but most Canadians, and I think that is well seen across Canada. The 95 per cent of people that I talked to before they even gave me their opinion as to whether or not we should pass it as it is, the add on agreement that we have, and we should pass it as it is. 95 per cent of the people said that they supported the Premier in his efforts and that he opened up the eyes, not only of people here, but the people across Canada.

Then they would give me their opinion and some of them would say, you know, vote against it for a variety of reasons, and others would say you, as a member of the Government, and the Government, the Premier have done what you can

and look to the future into the next round and pass it. I suppose the preface to their answer or to their opinion would be that the effort put forward by this Government and by the Premier, was almost superhuman and that it reflected the views of Canadians. And I am of the firm belief that it does. I am of the firm belief that what the Premier has been able to do is open the eyes of many people, many eyes that were closed shut. And I believe in doing so that whatever happens the constitutional process of Canada is going to be much the better and this contribution should be recognized.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. K. Aylward: One of the biggest problems, it is the problem, I think, one of the major problems is process. Everybody you talk to in the riding, everybody you talk to on the phone, everybody you talk to on the street - the other thing they say is the process. How can it come down to this? How can it come down to one Legislature or two? - and these closed door meetings and these all night sessions and negotiations and writing up the document. Things that are supposed to be there are not there and we do not know why. How can this be the process for putting together a constitution? And that alone, the process itself I think has caused more anger, more divisiveness, more problems, more acrimony than anything else that I think this confederation has seen in many years. And, you know, if we have learned anything it is that the process has to be corrected because it is unfortunate - this is a non-partisan issue as far as I am concerned. We are all 52 members

in this House of Assembly who will vote as we see fit as to our conscience after an evaluation of the entire issue.

But being it is a non-partisan issue I must say that the Prime Minister of this Canada should take a long look in the mirror, because he single-handedly has put people in positions to make decisions and has created a crisis situation which never, never should have occurred, should never have gotten to this point and he does not deserve - you know, it is most unfortunate that legislators across Canada are put in this position, and people across Canada are now torn and divided because of a roll of the dice attitude. And it disturbs me to no end as an individual who now must wrestle with this issue, not only deciding what is good for this Province and for my constituents, but what is good for confederation and good for Canada. You know, the Prime Minister of Canada is responsible for keeping it together, is responsible for representing all the interests of all the people. And it must be seen to be all of the interests of all of the people. And the problem that we have now is there is so much acrimony across this country, so much acrimony because the Prime Minister is seen as somebody who did not represent all of the interests of all of the people. And I think maybe he understands that now. I hope so. I hope so because it has been a very difficult lesson for all of us so far, and it is not over yet, but it has been a very difficult lesson to learn and to go through. And I think and I hope and I pray that whatever happens, that the process will be fixed, that the process will be put in place so that people have a say,

that they are able to contribute to the debate and that they are able to make a contribution and feel good about it, because at the end of the day you are not going to get everything you want, you are not going to see everything in a constitution that you want to see, but you have at the end of the day to be able to look back and say, well at least I was able to put my say forward and to make the contribution. And that is one of the problems, one of the major problems that people have with the Meech Lake Accord and with the process that the Prime Minister has undertaken and I think that it has done a disservice to this confederation. It has caused a lot of problems that are going to take a long time to heal. They will take a long time to heal.

I for one, as an individual member of a Legislature in Canada Provincially, find it unfortunate and I am hopeful that it will be resolved. There are words to describe what I think and I am trying to be as pleasant as I can. We face a dilemma. What are the consequences if we say no to Meech Lake? I heard Premier McKenna today and Premier Peterson today, Mr. McKenna may be right, I do not know, Mr. Peterson, may be right, I do not know. What are the consequences? Nobody knows. You can predict, I suppose, but we do not have the use of hind sight in that sense. We have to make decisions and hope for the best. But in making your decision you have to weigh what the possible consequences are, and whether or not there is short term pain for long term gain, or whether or not there will be long term pain. And I am not sure. I do not know for sure. I don't think anybody does. So, you have that type of an atmosphere and, you know we

have let it get away from us basically, but now we are down to this crisis period of four or five days, and we have to try to evaluate as best we can the consequences, to make a decision.

I hope whatever happens the people will understand the difficult situation we as legislators are in, and that we all are taking this pretty seriously, we are looking very, very closely at what the consequences might be and what is good and what is bad, and what is the best thing to do. I think everybody is taking it very seriously, and to be in this position again, I say, we will do the best we can as individuals and hope that whatever decision is taken, that will be for the best.

I think also when I look at the process we could possibly be the one Legislature that says no - under the rules we are able to do that. As a media person mentioned to me last week, 'You know, Newfoundland might be the only Province that says no. And your Government has said it should not be one Government that holds up the process.' Now I want to read something to you, it kind of sums it up. Perhaps the ultimate irony of the Meech Lake Accord is that those who oppose the inclusion of the unanimity clause in our Constitution in Manitoba and Newfoundland, the ultimate irony will be they will be forced to exercise their right to veto the Meech Lake Accord in order to prevent the possibility of any one Province ever holding our Constitution to ransom again. In order to protect our Constitution for all provinces, for all time, we must establish now and for always that the Canadian Constitution is the property of its people and it must never be

amended without substantial public input.

So in essence what we are saying basically is, and it is being said to us, we are 2 per cent of the population and so on, but we have the legal right to do, if members choose, and I do not know what is going to happen, or whatever, if they choose, we have the legal right. You know when that question is posed, this is the answer, here is the question, do we decide to pass it and leave the unanimity there, and hope that with unanimity will come a sacred trust, that with unanimity will come a sense of responsibility, that for the common good do what is best when it comes to amending the Constitution in the future, that no one province will hold it up. So actually we are being asked to pass that, and really to ask that this tremendous responsibility that will be given to every Legislature be that and be seen to be a sacred trust. And we are saying as individuals, or I as an individual if I decide to vote against it, that is not the process that we should be doing to change our Constitution in certain areas. That is not the process, I would be voting, if I do so, to give back or to allow for more, a better chance for change. It is an irony, Mr. Speaker, that I find, I suppose there is a number of them when it comes to this issue, especially an important issue as it is, it is an irony that I find difficult to deal with, difficult to make a decision on, because basically it is coming down to that, and a few other issues, and a couple of others, is deciding whether or not we are going to provide and take a sacred trust and a responsibility and are all of the provinces going to act in the proper manner? And the

problem is, I do not know, and I am sure if all of the members know, and they have to make a decision. Irony it is.

I find it ironic also, I have two letters, two of them from MLAs or MNAs in Quebec, one of them says they are against the Accord, the other says they are for the Accord for different reasons. It could be for a variety of reasons, but you get other correspondence and so on, but again it is a diverse opinion that is there. And I have two files of correspondence, one says, Meech Lake Correspondence - Yes. and the other says - No. You read one and then the other. You know the arguments are all heartfelt, they are all arguments that put forward a conscience, put forward some sound reasoning, and after you finish reading each letter, and each correspondence, and each telegram you know you start thinking, maybe so.

The other decision we have to look at in looking at what we have before us now in the House of Assembly, is whether or not, as it was referred to today in Meech Lake part 11, or the communique that was signed by the Premiers, was that enough, is that enough for us, is it enough for the other provinces? They seem to have indicated that it might be, but we are not sure what is going to happen in Manitoba. Is that enough? Was that the realistic expectation? Was that realistically what could have been gotten or is there more than could have been achieved? I for one am extremely proud and tremendously impressed with what the Premier was able to accomplish, I have always been, but he has shown himself to be able to withstand pressures and to put forward the cause, put forward what he and

this government and the people of the Province would like to see. What we have to decide now, or what we are being asked to decide now in a conscience vote, is whether or not what was accomplished was enough, or was it not enough? And if it was not enough then we have our answer and we go back to the table, and we will try to work out a better arrangement.

I think it is going to be difficult either way, because even when I evaluate what was accomplished you get differing opinions to that evaluation of what was accomplished in Ottawa a number of days ago. So you are trying to figure out, well, we put forward our best foot and we have been able to accomplish this, should we accept it? should we not? It becomes a very difficult decision, because it comes back to what are the consequences? And what are the real consequences?

I will continue to do my evaluation of that, Mr. Speaker, over the next day or so. I will continue to do my evaluation of the consequences, to see what the potential is, Mr. Speaker, to see where we can go if a certain decision is made either way. Because I am a firm believer, and I believe all members are here, that this Canada, and the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, has a bright future, it has a future that I think goes beyond imagination in the sense that we have a potential that is unlimited, that has no boundaries. But that potential will be achieved if every province is looked upon as being equal, and if every Province is also though seen to be somewhat having a special characteristic, maybe, but something special about them, and

I think we all do. I think this Province has a special identity and so on. But we have hung in there for a 123 years, we did it with a lot of debate and a lot of emotion, through a lot of difficult times. I think either way we are still going to be together. I am very optimistic about that. I believe that to be the case, but I know that the decision we make will stir the province of Quebec maybe one way or the other, I am not sure, maybe it will not, but I know it will stir the process and I did not come to a conclusion yet as to where that process will take us, to how it will be stirred up, to what benefit it will be, and whether or not it will be good for Canada. It all comes back to the personal evaluation we have tried to do as individuals.

This round of negotiations was meant originally to be, in my understanding, was meant to be for Quebec and to deal with Quebec's concerns. That is my understanding of it, and I believe that to be the case. There are other such major concerns that have to be addressed and, I think, what has come out of the process is that these concerns have to be addressed as soon as possible, if not immediately. With reference to Quebec, and them being in Confederation, I do not know what arrangement we will finally settle on. I do not know if it is going to be the Meech Lake Accord. I do not know if it is going to be some other arrangement ten years hence. It may be something else, but whatever it is going to be, it is going to be somewhat different, I expect, than other provinces have, because they are different. There will be some type of an arrangement, I am not sure what, but it will be some type of an

arrangement. I think Canada has changed, it is changing, evolving all the time, just like us here in this Province. We have come a long way and we will go a long way in the future, but, I believe whatever the arrangement there will be something different about it because Quebec is somewhat different. When that arrangement is finally completed, whatever it is, what has to be done, what has to be said, what has to be real, is that the Prime Minister of Canada is able to say to the people of Quebec, and the people of the rest of Canada, the same thing about what it is, because that has not been done, it has not been able to be said and it has caused the divisiveness that we see today. Whatever the arrangement is going to be it has to be acceptable, and it can be, but it has to be done in the proper manner. Mr. Speaker, as we go through the debate over the next day or so, and individual members rise and explain their view, I am going to listen and do a great deal of thinking, and try and come to the best and most reconcilable view I can come to.

It will be very difficult, whatever decision I make, but I say that we as a province have come a long way. and that this Government and this Premier have awakened the rest of Canada to what the Constitution is all about. I hope that from now on this wake-up call will not have to be sounded anymore, and that we deal with the problems up-front instead of trying to get people in dark rooms having meetings. That we deal with it, that we deal with the problems up-front, that we deal with the concerns, so that we do not ever, come to a crisis situation like we see now. There is no way it should have ever

happened. We have to deal with it but I hope and pray it does not happen anymore.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Hogan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I relish the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to be able to stand in my place tonight and speak in this debate on probably what could be classed as the most important issue that I, or any other member of this House, will have to deal with during our political lives.

May I first extend my sympathies to the Rideout family and the hon. Leader of the Opposition on the death of his father. I share his deep sorrow. It was not that long ago that he was very generous in his remarks and expressions to my family with a similar experience.

I would also like to comment, Mr. Speaker, that since we began our debate this morning, from watching members here in this House of Assembly prepare themselves for debate, I have watched them look around at other members, size each other up, listening attentively to the various speakers, and I detect a seriousness and a conscientiousness that I have never detected in this House before. I feel good about sharing that, I think it prevailed throughout the day with very few small exceptions. It is a pity that the debate has to come from the high plane and the high level that it is for personal attacks on our Premier earlier today. Also, in chatting with the member opposite, my colleague, rather

angrily about the provocative debate of the hon. Minister of Development earlier this afternoon, I think what we should be doing is looking at, instead of taking it as provocative or any otherwise, we should be looking at the innerself of each of the members as they speak, and try to understand that they have been given the rare opportunity to express their true feelings on a most important subject, and I think we should respect it. Hopefully, it will remain on a high plane. I would also be remiss if I did not comment on what I found in my District - I am getting ahead of myself, but I must say it's with the great admiration that the public in my district, at least, holds for the Premier, his conduct, and his practice over recent months in handling Newfoundland's interests in this debate, and the representation that he has made on behalf of the Province.

I think that following the Premier's address after - some people in my District were calling it the seven days war, after listening to the Premier's remarks last Saturday night, I guess it was, the Saturday night before last, I started to really think about the situation that we all now find ourselves in. I thought about what was going to happen, and having watched him perform over the last year and previous to that, I almost guessed what was going to happen when he got back here to the home Province and what we were going to be faced with. The soul searching started then, Mr. Speaker, on just what this Meech Lake Accord means, and more importantly, what I as an individual member of the House of Assembly, was going to have to do when the time came, and the

responsibility that rests with it. At meetings shortly after his return, and in conversation with all members of the House of Assembly on both sides, that responsibility became even graver and heavier, and I share with the hon. Minister of Mines and Energy in the sentiments that he expressed today so emotionally. I am glad he said it because that resolves that responsibility for me because I wanted to say a lot of things that he did say, and I probably would not have had the strength to complete them.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, having left the City last Wednesday to return to my District, I was contemplating and deliberating as to how I was going to handle the problem, and like my friend from Grand Bank, I share with you and my fellow members of the House what I encountered when I went back to my District.

I made a commitment as I was leaving the City that I was going to go into my District and face my constituents with an open mind. And I must confess, Mr. Speaker, that when I went back to my District I was trying to commit myself to come back to the House of Assembly to approve the Meech Lake Accord. To get it over and done with. Get it off our plate. To welcome Quebec back into the Constitutional family and not to tear my country apart.

Usually a person of some confidence, my confidence was shaken with these thoughts that what I could do, and what my fellow members of this House could do, was tear down this great nation, and it was frightening. These were the thoughts with which I went back to the District. I committed myself that I would be

as objective as I could, that I would meet my constituents one on one, in groups, or wherever I could find them. I laid out other plans; the telephone poll, door to door - which I did not get around to - but I did go wharf to wharf, flake to flake, boat to boat, school to school, and fishplant to fishplant.

But it is ironic, Mr. Speaker, that thinking all of these thoughts as I drove from the City, my wife thought I was after taking a vow of silence. And I was glad she did. As I got to my District in Dunville, she started to speak about what we going to have to eat as we had to skip supper. And of course, I found the excuse to stop at the local restaurant as we entered Dunville. We went into the restaurant, and apart from the staff there was a group of ladies there whom I recognized as nurses from the health care system in the area. Twelve or thirteen of them to be exact and their union rep. So we quickly had a bowl of soup, and several of them stopped at our table and spoke as they passed by. And of course I had said to the wife; this is a great opportunity to speak to a group already. Being the good fellow I am, I took my wife home and I went back and had a coffee and a nightcap with the nurses. Two hours later I got home. But I only had one nightcap, Mr. Speaker, I was careful - several coffees with the nightcap.

And with this open-mindedness I got in on the conversation. Of course they were talking about what might happen this week and what they feared happen and they were concerned about that.

And I coined a new phrase, Mr. Speaker, in my District anyway.

One of them asked me if I was on the campaign trail; and remembering the advise of my Premier who asked us not to go out and campaign one way or the other, for or against, I said; no, I was Meeching. Meeching, no screeching. That started a conversation and brought up the Meech Lake Accord. And when I left them after hearing their opinions, I started to get some of my confidence back but still resolved to keep the open mind, and I tried to reflect on the way home, how did I do, what was the count there. And out of the twelve ladies and the one man who were there - the man was very adamantly anti-Meech - one of the ladies asked a number of questions, which I hope I answered for her, but the other eleven were all anti-Meech. And I was delighted, Mr. Speaker, that there was no anti-French and there was no anti-Quebec. A few however; that we hope that if you do vote against the Accord, it will not result in the breakup of the country. But the majority of them there, probably with the exception of one lady, could not remember 1949 and what tore us apart. None of them felt that Canada was that weak a country. They had faith in its strength, and they had faith in the Quebec people, the residents of Quebec, not the politicians, or the parliamentarians, nor the media, nor the vested interests of law professors and university people, or the pressure groups, but the people themselves of Quebec would not reject Canada. It might shade a little bit different than the approximately 60/40, I think it was, in the 1980 referendum. It might vary a little bit from that and there might be a few people put out because of the Accord. But they thought that at the end

of the day that Canada would win, as it did before.

And I also told that group as I have told other groups that I met during the six or seven days - I told them of what I had listened to in the House of Assembly and what I had read about the economic chaos that would result; the high interest rates that we were now experiencing, the jittery financial institutions. As unbiased as I could, I talked about and spoke about economic revenge in the short term for not getting in line. As a matter of fact, I spoke so well about it that for the first two or three days people thought I had a closed mind and that I was a proponent of the Meech Lake Accord.

So I set about my District the next morning - after having to explain to the wife the next morning the two hours with the nurses - and I visited every single community, Mr. Speaker, every community.

As a matter of fact, the day before we left to go out, I had a call from the leader of a fisherman's group in the Southern Harbour - Fairhaven - Little Harbour area. A very angry call came into my office about the procrastination that was taking place regarding the caplin fishery in Placentia Bay. When I returned to my office, my secretary gave me the name and number and I returned the call. And whoever answered the phone was slow saying hello and I could hear the angry voices in the background. I asked for the chap who had called and he came to the phone. I told him who was calling and asked him what I could do for him. And before he even started on the caplin, he said to me, Mr. Speaker, don't you

vote for that damn Accord. And I said, why not? He said one Province should not be any more equal than the other, but I haven't got time to talk to you about it now. So he went into his dissertation about the caplin fishery in the Province that they were having. I went to see him later, and I visited Fair Haven, saw a larger group of people, as large as you can get in a community like Fair Haven, and he expressed, to my surprise very eloquently, why no province should have any greater status or power than, not only ours, but any other province. I accused him of being anti-Quebec. He thought I insulted him. He did not care if it was Prince Edward Island, and they gave them distinctness because they were surrounded by water, or us. He said, I know they have been getting away with murder for years. But that is not the issue. And the same group, most of them were around in 1949, talked about the possibility of the loss of the old age pension, family allowance, UI and the same tirade that I had heard in other places, Mr. Speaker. It made no difference, 100 per cent of the group that was there, twenty-one people or so, said no to Meech.

I visited all the other communities. I was down on the wharf heads and found an old fellow on a gump, the same as my friend for Port de Grave did, working on his nets, and when I said to him, 'Skipper, what do you think of Meech?'

He replied, 'I do not know very much about it.' But they in their own way said, 'No one province should be any better off. Are we not all equal, Mr. Hogan? Should not our provinces be equal? Should not all the people be equal? What makes a fisherman in

the Gaspé Bay any better than I am? And on it went?

And I ran into people who were positive towards the Meech Lake Accord too. But all said, it was not for the family allowance or the old age pension. It was because they did not want to see this great Nation of ours break up. It had nothing to do with Quebec. As a matter of fact some even spoke about the reformists that are out west. And I was surprised for people who said, I do not know anything about it, that they then could carry on a conversation that touched on the issues. They did not much care about the appointment of Supreme Court judges, nor the immigration issue, but the restriction and management of Federal funds, even some of them brought it up. But all the proponents, their underlining factor in supporting Meech was to keep this country together, not anti-French, or not anti-Quebec.

I met, Mr. Speaker, with, I am delighted to say, the fish plant in Jersey side, which you have heard me speak about, and opened on Saturday morning by the hon. the Minister of Fisheries. The people are all back to work, a new operator, and taking caplin despite problems in other areas, and looking very well for a prosperous season. And, of course, that was uppermost in the minds of the people that I ran into there, particularly last Saturday morning around 11:00 a.m. when they were all gathered to meet with their new employer. And, of course, I availed of the opportunity in their lunch room to speak to the forty or so workers that were there, and again it was almost unanimous, if not unanimous, if there was a

dissenter, they were silent. In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, I had a number of people working the telephones who made some 600 calls, just in the Placentia intertown area, the 227, the Freshwater Exchange. You would not believe how many people are not home over a four or a five day period, but they reached 400 I think of the 600, give or take a few, and 66 per cent of the people indicated that they had some knowledge of the discussions on the Meech Lake Accord. There were 28 per cent said they did not know, and the balance gave a variety of answers.

The second question we asked, coincidental to speaking to the Premier a minute ago, was did the people in my District think that Premier Clyde Wells handled the issue of Meech Lake well over the past couple of months and in the recent seven days in Ottawa? 80.6 per cent, and I have it documented here, Mr. Speaker, if anybody would care to look at it, 80.6 per cent said yes; 1 1/2 per cent said no, he did not; and the balance did not know, they had a variety of answers, but there was not a complete yes or no. Now statistics can distort an issue.

The next question we asked was: Do you approve of the Accord? 78 per cent said no, they did not approve of the Accord. The fourth question asked, should MHA Bill Hogan vote for the Accord? 67 per cent said I should vote no. You will notice the difference of 11 per cent. A lot of the responses we were getting for the yes side, indicated the same thing. And as the days went by I found three underlying factors. The yeses were saying, we did not want a break up of the country, and the noes were saying that no province,

no people should be any better off than another province or its people. And a very great contributing factor was the process, people always spoke of the process. And they were not satisfied, not at all, even some of those who said to vote for the Accord.

So, Mr. Speaker, another interesting visit I had was with an assembly of students and teachers and maintenance people at the Placentia Campus last Thursday morning, I think it was. As best I could I took the five points of the Accord and I explained it to them, as best I could, in their terms and mine, and I was encroaching upon another event that was going to take place at 10:30 and I went from 10:00 a.m. to 10:35, so I fielded a few questions and a few comments from the floor, and when they asked me my opinion I said, I do not have one. I also gave them the pros and cons as best I could, including the economic chaos in the long term, the instability of the country and the short economic troubles that we might have for rejecting the Accord, and seeing that I was encroaching on other people's time who had come in and speak to them, there were almost 200 people there, by the way, Mr. Speaker, I asked them, what should I do on Friday next, should I vote yes to the Accord? There wasn't a sound. There wasn't a movement in the crowd. So I repeated the thing, and jokingly I said, did I say that in French that you can't understand what I am saying, I am asking you, should I vote 'yes', give me a show of hands. Not one hand went up, Mr. Speaker. When I asked for a show of hands to say 'no', I couldn't find any that were down, and I said to them, I hope you are telling me the

truth. I hope you are telling me as you feel, because if not, you are asking me to shoulder an awful responsibility on your behalf.

A few spoke, Mr. Speaker, and came to me privately afterwards and spoke there, and the underlying factor again was, they did not want this country to break up, but they all thought that it was strong enough and big enough and fine enough and diversified enough to withstand anything that Meech can or cannot do for or against. So all of these public appearances, or one on ones, you know, the anti-Meech was so firm, so loud and clear that it almost made a liar out of the polls I was taking, because it wasn't that severe.

I went from school to school and probably spoke with - I don't know if it was four or five, Mr. Speaker, groups of high school teachers, elementary school teachers, from Southern Harbour to Placentia. The teachers, if they had a pro-Meecher amongst them, didn't speak up. I am trying to say this without being partisan, without trying to tell you that in the Placentia district, that everybody, just overwhelmingly went anti-Meech, and I am only telling it to you as it is, as I found it. It was very surprising.

As a matter of fact, it was somewhat disappointing, to the extent that there were no different opinions, something that could give me some guidance. Probably I was a little cowardly like my friend here from Port de Grave, when it came to this particular thing, but I still wanted to get it out of the way. However, my resolve of Wednesday last, Mr. Speaker, as I left the city and this House, was changing,

in that I was getting my head screwed back on right, and I was saying to myself: You believed in this country for such a long while, you should still believe in it. Shame on you for last Thursday thinking otherwise. It took the people in Placentia to get that to me. Even the anti-Meech people.

Now there were pro-Meech people who shared the opinion that there is going to be economic chaos or some sort of an economic fallout which would be detrimental to us, both in the short term and the long term. As a matter of fact, some of my dear friends, whom I am sure are probably watching it on television at this moment, opinions which I respect very much, and in my search for guidance in my District, Mr. Speaker, they were some of the first people I ran into and I was most delighted to see them, that eventually I was going to get rid of this Meech Lake and we could get on with other business of the House and of the Province and of the country.

But not so, Mr. Speaker. The people of the Placentia District were too adamant, were too strong, and I found the anti-Meech people strong in their resolve, strong in stating their opinions. I would be less than truthful if I didn't run into some anti-French and anti-Quebec, but they were so insignificant, I was pleased, I was delighted that the good people of the District could see further than their noses and a great many of them, Mr. Speaker, I might also add, probably had the experience of working with them in such places as Churchill Falls and Labrador West, and known to my friend from Menihek. Even those from the softball wars and the

hockey wars and the union wars of Labrador West as we knew it, probably had some good reason to be anti-something or other, but it didn't feel that way when they were expressing this opinion. Again, I was pleasantly, as I said, pleasantly surprised.

So, Mr. Speaker, I returned to this House today fully prepared to listen to the invited guests of the Premier, with the co-operation of friends opposite, to listen to Mr. Peterson, reluctantly listen to Mr. McKenna, and the thing that stood out as it stood out with others on Mr. Peterson's remarks and the thing that I succumbed to last Wednesday, Thursday and Friday and probably into Saturday, was that, if we are going to vote for Meech out of fear, don't vote for it.

I listened intently to his arguments and his quotation of the legal interpretations that he had of the Accord, but they didn't have the ring for which I was looking. He talked about one great accommodation that was given in 1987, I guess it was, first when the Accord was signed, or not in 1987 but 1982 when the Constitution was signed with the notwithstanding clause, and we know how that was used.

The other thing that struck me, Mr. Speaker, and the Member for St. John's East may be upset when I say it, if there was fearmongering in this House today, it came from Mr. McKenna, when he spoke of the destruction of our nation. He spent a great deal of time - I don't know how much time, but it seemed to me the longest five minutes or three of four minutes ever, how he addressed the subject of the Americans watching us on their

televisions and they are wondering how a great nation like Canada could be falling apart at the seams because we wouldn't welcome one province into the Constitutional fold.

He very vividly and very dramatically, and he did it very well, very emotionally, and I don't doubt the poor man believes it, how its all going to come down around our ears, but then, when he was finished, Mr. Speaker, he negated everything he said by saying: 'I will say to the Americans who are watching television, you will not pick our bones.' So, he spent five minutes telling us that the nation is going to fall apart and then he spent two sentences or ten words saying we are not going to fall apart.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, the only good thing about the Meech Lake Accord after all my deliberations, I still will open my mind if there are any more interesting speakers or any more concrete arguments to come, and I expect there will be many tomorrow. I understand we have some arguments coming up tomorrow, and there will be other speakers speak this evening. But the best thing about the Meech Lake Accord was the motive, was to by some sign, by some document or some wherewithal, that we were going to convince a Federalist minded Government in Quebec to come back into the constitutional family. The intention was good, and God forgive me for praising Prime Minister Mulroney, but he did convince the people to get back to the table and discuss it. And it went downhill from there. The conception was wrong, the debate was wrong, the process was wrong, the conclusion which resulted in

Meech 11 was wrong, Meech is wrong. And anything that is wrong, we cannot approve, at least I cannot, unless there are some magical words of wisdom, Mr. Speaker, between now and midnight on Friday, I will not be voting yes to a wrong document. I will be voting no. No to Meech Lake, and I hope I am making the right decision. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Kilbride.

Mr. R. Aylward: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all I want to say that these last few days have been, I was going to say the hardest few days of my political career, Mr. Speaker, but that would not be quite correct, they were certainly a very interesting few days, since I have been elected to this House of Assembly, in the last eleven years. There has been an issue in the past which is not nearly as important as this, but it did raise this emotional fever, I guess, some time ago, and I actually had more representation on the other one than this.

I guess it is almost a shame to compare them but the emotional fever was there. When I was secretary of the Flag Committee, when we brought our flag into this assembly or presented it to this Assembly, that same emotional fever was there Mr. Speaker, and I had more representation on that then I actually did on this issue. And the representation that I had at that time was a very strong 'No' to the flag Mr. Speaker, and as history will record that my vote at the time, which was the only other free vote that I ever experienced in this

House of Assembly, my vote at that time was 'Yes', Mr. Speaker. What I would like to do tonight, first of all, is to present the views of the constituents of the District of Kilbride, the views as they have expressed them to me over the last week now, I guess, since last Wednesday. Mostly since last Wednesday, there were some calls a bit earlier on, but very few. Last Wednesday, when people understood that we had a free vote in the House of Assembly, and I certainly believe that the process of having a free vote in this House of Assembly is a good one, and I congratulate the Premier, and I congratulate the Leader of the Opposition for allowing Members to have a free vote on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, during the last seven days, I have had, and I cannot say this definitely because I give the reasons. I have had between a hundred and twenty and a hundred and fifty telephone calls on this issue. My home number and office phone number have been advertised in the media on four different occasions and one of those occasions, the weekend paper which is widely read in my District, I put a personal ad asking people to phone me and make their representation. And the reason I say, between one hundred and twenty and one hundred and fifty is because there were people who phoned when I was not home, or when I was not in the office, who did not leave their name and address, and did not leave their vote, or some would phone without leaving their name and voted against. But in this week there was at least a hundred and fifty phone calls. I have been in contact with probably, from regular social events that you would attend, I play softball in

my District, so you meet softball players, I attended a wedding right in the middle of this at which there were two hundred people, about one hundred and fifty constituents. So overall I have come across probably three hundred people under normal activity. Out of these three hundred people that I have talked to, a lot of the ones socially did not mention Meech, for many other reasons, not because it was not on their minds but because we were at another activity. There were some who did and the ones I wanted to give consideration to, congratulations to for taking the time to do it, were the ones who I actually talked to on the telephone and discussed this matter with them, at their leisure. I did not try to cut them off at any time, I wanted to discuss it as much as they wanted to, and hear their views, and if they asked me for my views, I gave them my views at the time.

Mr. Speaker, there were ninety four people I got in contact with on the telephone. That was all except three people, up until today. I got some calls today that I did not get a chance to answer because I attended the funeral of the Father of the Leader of the Opposition. So these people I have not been able to get back to yet. Of those one hundred and twenty people who I talked to personally, I had twenty two in favour and ninety eight against. Mr. Speaker, that shows that in my mind and the people I did not talk to obviously, I would say lean towards the against figure. But, Mr. Speaker, there are nine thousand one hundred and thirty one voters listed on the last electoral lists in my District, Mr. Speaker. I do not have a doubt that a pole would

show that between seventy and eighty five percent would probably say they were against it. The easiest thing for me to do as a politician or for any of us to do as politicians on any issue I guess, would be to govern by polls. If I put out an impersonal poll as I call them, or if I have a result of an impersonal poll, you would get the figures, but you do not usually get the why. The figures that are reported are not always the whys. There has been a poll done, I know the Premier had, it was reported today, that showed forty-two percent and forty-two percent, based on the question that was asked. That probably is not representative of, it certainly is not representative of what I am hearing on this issue. Mr. Speaker, of the people who called me, there were many reasons they gave for being for or against, on whichever side. Mr. Speaker, just to read out some of them, here quickly are some of the reasons: I am not sure of the procedure; I am afraid to lose my pensions; which is a shame for someone to have to say in this day and age, Mr. Speaker; I am for Canada, to keep Canada together, there could be economic difficulties, the veto which was one, a very big one. Many people said the veto was a problem. There was some anti-French sentiments expressed and I am proud to say, Mr. Speaker, that of the people who called me, there were not a lot of anti-French, and that begs a lot to say for constituents who I represent, and I am proud of them actually. There might have been undertones, maybe they were not saying it, I do not know, but, Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say that I did not have a lot of anti-French. A lot of the people who took time to tell me, well 60 per cent of them

were well informed, the ones I talked to. They were well informed on the issue that concerned them at least, if not well informed on the overall philosophy.

Mr. Speaker, the process came up many, many times, and when process came up invariably the Prime Minister's name came up. And there is a vast majority of them have a lack of confidence in what the process was, and most of them blame the Prime Minister for their feelings on the process. I am not pleased that our Prime Minister is thought of that way. It does not go over well for the office. Besides the political issues in the Office of the Prime Minister, I wish my constituents could have a lot of confidence in, as I hope they have confidence in me, but obviously they were very upset with the process, and the Prime Minister was linked to that.

Mr. Speaker, some of the other reasons: Canada would stay together anyway if you voted for or against it. Some were worried about Canada splitting up, Mr. Speaker. A lot of people who were fairly informed on the issues, and a lot of them who were for it or against it or some of them who were for it or against it were saying get rid of it. And I did have calls from people who were unemployed and I did have calls from people who were on strike, unfortunately, at this time and they wanted to be rid of it to get on with business. So that feeling was in the District too. Yet most often they would be against Meech Lake. They would say they were against it, but get on with it. Do something else, Mr. Speaker.

We were getting calls in the office from outside the Province

and from within the Province, and I kept a list of that, Mr. Speaker, and some of the reasons again, we tried to guess what they were saying or guess what the feelings were. I guess the general feeling from people who called without wanting to speak to an individual member: there were some anti-Quebec, there were some who said it was the wrong process, there were some who said they were not familiar with the items, but felt unsure or unsafe for whatever reasons they did not want to vote for it because they felt unsure about it. Some said Quebec wants everything. The distinct society came up a lot in my District, and in the calls that we had. People were worried about the distinct society. Some of the calls we got the people told us that they were directed to call our office from the Premier's Office, and I do not know why. I am sure the Premier did not have anything to do with it, I would not suggest it for the world.

But these are some of the reasons that my constituents gave for either voting for or voting against. And, Mr. Speaker, they have left a message that they had their mind made up at the time.

But the most important thing I wanted to do this week is not find out who was for and who was against, the most important question I had for everyone of them was why? And the whys were what I wanted to hear. And if the whys were informed or if they were not informed. And I am pleased to say that a lot of them were fairly well informed, if not on the package, on the specific thing that bothered them.

I did not try to change their mind, and I made it clear that I

was not trying to change their mind. They have an opinion the same as I have an opinion. But I did express my opinion to the ones who had, and a lot of them softened. They were not as strongly against it when they finished, but I still marked them against it. They said first they were against it, and they were still against it when I finished as far as I was concerned.

But, Mr. Speaker, what I found from the ones who called and the ones who I talked to personally when I would meet them somewhere, and I would ask them the question, I found a difference, and these are not counted in the list of for or against, but I found that there were more people when I talked to them who would lean to be in favour. All had concerns, and that is the surprising thing. This issue has grabbed people, no doubt about that. They all had concerns, but when I would speak to them personally they did not seem to be as adamant. I do not know why that is, maybe I look so pitiful to them they did not want to give me a blast right there. That is not impossible, because I know the people in my District and they are very kindhearted people. In the last election I found out how kindhearted they were when I expected to get about 68 per cent of the vote, and I got about 47 per cent or 48 per cent. They just did not want to tell me that they were sick of looking at me. But I did find that when I was walking around.

One thing that I found helpful, and I do want to mention it because I found it helpful in trying to explain things to people, last weekend there was an article by Peter Boswell, and his position on Meech Lake is well

known, but the article, 'The Meech Accord and what it means' seemed to help people understand it a bit. It was an explanation of what was in it, good or bad as it is. But it put it in layman's terms rather than legal terms, and people seem to get a grasp on that and a lot of people obviously read it and certainly it helped me to try to explain that to the people. So that article I could agree with quite strongly when he was given his own opinion, again it was his opinion, and everyone had a shot at their opinions.

Mr. Speaker, as I said before the easiest thing for any politician to do would be to do this in personal poll and vote with the majority. I cannot do it in this one because the whys are just as important as your vote is. When I talked to the people who called me and they explained their whys, and I gave my point of view which is based on a different philosophy than what their philosophy was, and I will get into that a little bit later, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, just to say that some of the side issues that cannot help me make up my mind, I got calls on them, but obviously I cannot consider them as being able to make up my mind because that is not what I am voting on in here. Some of the side issues like I said, there were some small anti-French feeling there. Some people used Churchill Falls as a reason to vote against it. I could not do that. French immersion was even mentioned to me as a reason to vote against it, I cannot consider it. The sign laws in Quebec. It is not in here to vote on, but it is not totally irrelevant, I agree. But it is something I am not voting on in here - the reason that the sign

laws are there. Language laws in Quebec also were some of the reasons that I am not voting on them in this actual Accord. It is not in there.

Some of the reasons people gave me that I certainly did think about and I did explain my side of it to them, and were legitimate, were process, process and Mulroney went together as I said before. I must say the process, I find, was not right. Last week was not right. I do not agree with it. Unfortunately to explain it to my constituents last week's process was not what I was involved in. I have been involved in this directly since 1985, so it is not a rushed or a hurried decision that I am going to make based on what happened last week. I have had time to consider it. And I fell down as well as the Federal Government fell down and I will admit to it by not getting the information out earlier. If there had been some process to getting information out of why and what Meech Lake is about and how it agrees or disagrees with certain philosophies, that would have been helpful since 1985. Although that was not done, and it was not done enough, but it still was done, the process that we went through in 1985, 1986, 1987 was reported and there was an opposing view in this Province at the time when we voted on it. The Premier made his feelings known as Leader of the Opposition. That was well publicized. I did not have a call, not one question about it during those times. It was last week's process that really caught peoples attention, and I know it happened to us when we were there, that when our Premier went and fought Ottawa, it happened to be another Prime Minister at the time, Newfoundlanders seemed to

catch to that. And our Premier now again went and fought, stood up for Newfoundland as was the perception then, and certainly that got the emotion going. That is what got people interested I would say. But that was not the case when we were doing this. It was being considered in 1985 to 1987 times. And the emotion was not there.

Mr. Speaker, things have to be considered and you are blamed for fearmongering when you are saying these things, but there has to be a consideration there of what would happen if Canada broke up, you know, what is going to happen? It has to be considered by me because I am definitely one of the 51 people here who will cast a vote. It has to be in the back of mind. It will not be the only thing that makes up my mind, but it certainly is a reason to consider.

One other big reason to consider, and the hon. member for Placentia just mentioned it, is that it did get Quebec back to the table and this process will keep them there at the table. That again is a big consideration if you want to go on to another step. Some people will argue that if you pass this it is not good going on to another step, but if you want to use the philosophical argument that you need the ten provinces plus their First Minister at the table to step forward or to go ahead anymore, the Meech Lake process or the Meech Lake document would be important if we passed it, and if we do not pass it then the question marks come up again, and unfortunately I have not got the wisdom of solomon. I do not know the answers. If I am going to err, my personality will be to err on the side of conservatism. I do

not want to take the chance. I would lean towards trying to say that this would be, by passing an accord, there would be more chance that we get together and go on in step, by turning down the Accord, then the question mark comes. Maybe it would not matter, maybe we will all get back together anyway. But when the maybe's come in to me, if I am going to err I would rather err the other way. If I am wrong one way or the other, I suppose we certainly will all be held accountable.

Mr. Speaker, I have gone over this and over this and over this, like I said, since 1985. I was directly involved in the native constitutional issue. I was fortunate enough to be our representative on the Ministerial level on the native constitutional meetings that were in progress for two of the three years, 1985 and 1986. I was fortunate enough to go to a First Ministers Conference, the final First Ministers Conference actually as it worked out, the First Ministers conference that did not get the deal that we were looking for. And I guess that is a story in itself and nobody seems to be telling it, but there was almost a deal at that meeting.

At that meeting there was a resolution on self Government that was just about approved by everyone, but we did not make it. That is unfortunate, I find that unfortunate. The ironic thing about it is that, I suppose there is some irony there, that Quebec was one of the strongest if not the strongest supporter of the native issues, and the other bit of irony is that Manitoba was the other strongest, Rollin Penner was the Attorney General who represented them. And both of

these were the strongest together for supporting native issues, and I guess there is some irony there of what is happening now in that situation, but they would have to work that out. What I have to do is make a decision for Newfoundland and for my constituents and for my conscience, so that is what I will be trying to do.

Mr. Speaker, when we get down to what I tried to explain to my constituents in 1979 when I ran to become involved in public life in this province, nobody except a small few people knew who Bob Aylward was, most of them were surveyors and some of them were softball players, but I had no great political following in Newfoundland or not even in Kilbride. I had a lot of relatives which was very fortunate, and I was on the good side of my family at the time, so that again was very fortunate. But why I ran was - and I was not a likely candidate, I was certainly not picked by the party because the party did not know who I was, I happened to be a worker on a poll at times, but not a great leader. I was caught up in the emotions at the time too of Premier Peckford, and Premier Peckford was going to fight for more say and more control and development of our resources, for the benefit of the people of this Province. What he wanted and what got me interested was to say that this province needs more say, this province needs more power, this province needs more control. And, Mr. Speaker, that is why I got involved in 1979. And in 1989 when we had the last election I am still of that philosophy. That philosophy dictates that you have stronger provinces. It follows from that that you try to get

power to the provinces and that is the philosophy I still follow.

There is another very legitimate philosophy that the Premier follows, no doubt, that we should have a very strong centralist Government and that is legitimate. It just happens to differ philosophically with the way I feel, and that is what I try to convey to the constituents of the District of Kilbride. I find it personally insulting that some bureaucrat in Ottawa can tell my neighbor in Petty Harbour or my constituent in Maddox Cove if he can go fishing or not, and I got no say in it. The elected representative of this House of Assembly has no say if that person can go fishing or not. If sometimes there is consultation out of the goodness of someone's heart they might come and ask us, but there is no real say for me to tell, or for this Legislature not for me or for whoever represents this Legislature to say to the person in Maddox Cove or Petty Harbour that he can or cannot fish and I find that personally insulting because Newfoundlanders are capable of understanding and making these decisions.

Mr. Speaker, I also fought extremely hard under adverse conditions, and I remember the 1982 battles on the constitution and the repatriation, I remember, my memory is not very short. That was a war. There were court cases before the Supreme Court of Canada. That was worse than this is right now, I think. And, Mr. Speaker, the provinces fought hard at those times to get power, such as some of the powers that Meech Lake has, and this process now, it is a continuation of it. I would have hoped by now that we would have learned enough to get rid of

the conflict, but I guess we are still a young country and we have to go other steps forward to try to get rid of that and to unite even more, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we fought hard and long and under a lot of adversity to get what is now called the Atlantic Accord, and, Mr. Speaker, that was not easy. There were times when we had not a lot of support in this Province for doing that, but the belief was there that if that offshore resource was going to be developed for the benefit of this Province, that we had to have some meaningful say. We needed some power. I would love to see that, I would love to see our Premier want to have that on the next agenda, and get it into the Constitution much like Quebec is looking for their distinct society now because it is there and someone of an opposing view cannot come and change it on them. That is the security that Quebec is looking for under a distinct society, is the security that I would like to have in knowing that offshore resource and the Atlantic Accord that gives us a say, a meaningful say in its development, would be protected even though people of different political views or different philosophical views had been elected, and I would like to see it protected so they cannot change it.

Mr. Speaker, to look at the Meech Lake Accord itself, philosophically as I said, it agrees with my philosophical arguments. It is giving the Provinces more say. It is giving them, indirectly, if not directly, meaningful say in what they want.

When I talked to my constituents, I tried to go through a lot of

them clause by clause, and asked them what they found wrong. Then we would discuss that clause and not the rest of them.

Mr. Speaker, we have the Distinct Society Clause. I personally believe that Quebec is a distinct society. I know there are many people who disagree with me, but I personally believe that and I support it. There are other distinct societies. Maybe native peoples are distinct people. I would have liked to have been able to project myself back in the past and say that we have had three founding nations instead of two; which would have been good in the beginning. And had that been, maybe some of our native issues would not be so complicated today.

But Mr. Speaker, the next thing is the Senate. The Senate changes that are provided in the Meech Lake Accord are a step forward. They are not far enough for my liking but they are a step forward. We get a say into who goes into the Senate. And actually when you look at numbers in the senate, if the senate has any power, when you look at the numbers that are there now, if you want to take regions, as I understand it the western region has 24, Ontario and Quebec have 24 each, the Maritime area has 24 and Newfoundland has 6 more. So if you want to take the area of most disparity in our country right now, the Atlantic area together, and I know this is a leap in logic probably, but if you want to take the Atlantic area together - if the senate is going to give us power - we have 30 now when any other region only has 24. So from the numbers game, we are ahead right now with the add on agreement there there will be a couple of more. Well,

Newfoundland will get some. But to say that the Senate, whether it be elected - my personal view, which certainly is probably not very practical, would be to banish the Senate and save the money. But I know that is not a practical solution so it will not come, but that would be my personal view.

But if that is not the case, then we should have an elected Senate and we should have an equal Senate. But if we have an elected Senate and we have an equal Senate, I am glad that I have a vote, and this Province would have a veto to say where the Senate will get its power when it is formed. When this elected equal Senate is put in place, I am glad we have a veto. To say that if it is going to take all the power away from a Province or the Provinces, they have to get power from somewhere, if they do not have it now - or maybe they are not exercising it. If they do not have it now, they can get it from the Federal Government or they can get it from the Provincial Government. Probably the Federal Government, the Premier said that would be his philosophy. I do not say the Federal Government would like to see them get too much of their power, but that is possible. But the fact that we will have a veto, which many people did not want to see in the constitution, they did not want to see a veto, but it is a good thing in the case that if someone tries to take our power and put it into the senate - if seven Provinces plus 50 per cent had agreed on it, it would have been done.

Mr. Speaker, what is in here on immigration I do not have any problem with it. If Quebec wants to encourage French speaking people to go and to live in

Quebec, I think they should be encouraged to do that. I do not have any problem with it. All the Provinces get this same power, but in our case we have to get our own people working before we could use any power in immigration that I know off. Mr. Speaker, I have to rush through the rest of it. I could stay here forever but other people want to speak.

Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court of Canada: as explained by many people there are two different systems of law in this Province. And you need people from both sets of laws to be able to interpret these laws. There could be a problem with it. But if there is a common law and a civil law in this country, we need judges on the supreme court to judge the common law and the civil law; to be experienced in both of them. So I do not have a problem with that.

The spending powers, Mr. Speaker: I know the Premier will disagree with me on this vehemently, but this is one of the things again, that I have fought for since I have have been elected. And if my reasons for being elected are so wrong and they do not represent the District of Kilbride anymore, I am answerable for that. I realize it. I will pay the price and I expect to. But the spending powers, when I explain them to my constituents, the daycare program is probably - and we all hope that there will be a national daycare program brought into this country in the near future. So if we have a daycare program that is developed in Ottawa - we have a lot of national programs developed in Ottawa, and if they are national they should be. Now, if we have a daycare program which will be a national program that

happens to be developed to suit large urban areas; which we are not, Newfoundland does not have a large urban area. St. John's is the largest but compared to Ontario and Quebec we have no large urban areas. So if we have a national program in daycare developed to suit that large urban center and it does not suit Newfoundland, it does not fit our fishplants, it does not fit our people who work in the agricultural or forestry industry, we can take that money and use it for the same daycare, the same basic program that the Federal Government has, and we can suit it to our needs. And that is one of the basic things that I have been fighting for for the eleven years. We have a national program now that is set up and it is changed a little bit for high unemployment areas, which helps some of us, but we have an unemployment insurance program set up now that if we could take the money and adjust it to our needs, I am sure that the fishermen in Labrador who continuously have problems year after year with late ice, we could do something to accommodate that without having to get the whole country to change. That would be a good thing in my mind, Mr. Speaker, if we could do that.

Mr. Speaker, the amending formula and the veto: And I will clue up very quickly because I know my time is going. The amending formula that is in place now, the general amending formula of seven Provinces plus 50 per cent of the population to make most changes. If that was in effect, and if Meech Lake was not in effect, or this disagreement on Meech Lake was not in effect; this Meech Lake Agreement now would have been passed automatically Friday,

without Newfoundland having a say on it. No matter what our say is, one way or the other, without a veto we would not have a say on this. If the regular amending formula took place there are enough Provinces now who support it and have approved it, and Newfoundland and Ontario would not have a say in it. And that is why I say, certainly in this case no matter with point of view you have, the veto is helpful to Newfoundland. People told me this veto is going to cause a problem. You will not get anything else approved. But the first test of this veto; what is going to be approved or not, is now. It is what we are doing. And if it does not work, the people who say no are right. If it does work, the people who say we have approved it all and the Meech Lake is approved, we show that it does work. And Mr. Speaker, if I have a problem with the veto then I cannot vote in this debate because this whole Meech Lake Accord would have been approved if we had used the other amending formula.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want the veto. I would like to have a say. I am proud to be able to stand up here and explain my views, and I am very proud to be able to stand up and explain the views of my constituents. And they happen to differ on this one quite a bit, but I will be answerable for that.

Mr. Speaker, when I look at the clauses, what I am voting on in the Meech Lake Accord, the question I ask is where is the hurt. I cannot find that hurt, I do not know where it is. I do not see how it hurts Newfoundland, I think it helps us. I do not see where it hurts Canada because I think it makes us stronger in the regions. So, Mr. Speaker, when it

comes time to vote sometime Friday, as you have probably concluded from my speech now, I am voting by my conscience. I really feel hurt that I have to do this, unfortunately it is not going to be what the majority of my constituents asked me to do. And that means more to me than all the Meech Lakes and everything else because I do not like to do that. I did it once before in the Flag Committee and people understood it. I will be doing it this time, but I feel bad about it. But I will suffer the consequences if I am not representing the views of the majority of them. And I accept that. That is our system now, and I agree with that system. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Decker: Mr. Speaker, I am a little bit overwhelmed by the Member for Kilbride. Usually he is so brief in his remarks that the times goes very fast. But tonight he was so involved in his subject that he went on for forty-five minutes or so, and I was itching to get up. But I enjoyed his speech, Mr. Speaker, so I certainly will not take that out on the hon. Member. Mr. Speaker, I believe, that we have reached unanimity in this Province and in this nation. I am proud to be able to say that, because as the Meech Lake debate shows, we do not reach unanimity over very many things in Canada these days or in Newfoundland and Labrador these days. But the unanimity I am talking about is the phrase which everyone seems to agree to. That the Meech Lake Accord is flawed.

There is the unanimity that we hear. Everyone agrees that we have before us a document, and a process which is flawed. Yet, Mr. Speaker, we are still being asked by some, to ratify this Agreement. Somehow, the logic, escapes me, and I have to ask why we are going through an exercise to ratify a document which by everyone's agreement is flawed. It reminds me of something which happened to me about thirty years ago, just after I finished high school, Mr. Speaker. I was working in the mail order department of McMurdos Drug Store, on Water Street - it is no longer there. But at that time, mail orders use to come in from all over Newfoundland and Labrador. There were not many drug stores in the outports and prescriptions would come in. And I remember one day receiving a particular letter from a woman in one of our outports. Now remember, Mr. Speaker, it was thirty odd years ago, so I do not remember it word for word. But, I will give my hon. Members the gist of this particular letter. Dear Mr. McMurdo, she started off, 'you will remember that last month I had a prescription mailed out from your store', and she begins to describe the pills. The little pink pills are so long, and so big, however she had lost her pills. And so, Mr. McMurdo she said I would like for you to send me out another couple of dozen of these pills, because I lost my prescription. She signed it, yours truly, so and so, from such and such a place. Then there was a post script, Mr. McMurdo, please disregard this letter, I have found the pills, they were in the coat pocket in my Sunday coat. Now, Mr. Speaker, the logical question, the logical question would be, why did she bother

sending the letter. Why would you bother trying to pass a flawed document, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Decker: Mr. Speaker, there are many flaws in this document. I want to show you a flaw, which is very vivid, Mr. Speaker. It is in the Distinct Society Clause. Now the implication of the Distinct Society Clause as it relates to special Legislative status for any one Province, has been referred to over, and over by hon. Members in this Assembly, and by people throughout the nation. But there is another particular irony about this Distinct Society Clause, which comes to my attention, Mr. Speaker. I have here a picture of the Right Hon. Pierre Elliott Trudeau, and according to the Distinct Society Clause, this gentleman is a member of a distinct society in Canada. I have here from the June 16 edition of the Globe and Mail, a picture of Elijah Harper, obviously by his high cheek bones, by his braided hair, by his dark complexion, he is a member of the aboriginal peoples. I understand he is a Cree Indian. Now what kind of convoluted logic, tells me that this gentleman is not a member of a distinct society. Well the hon. Pierre Trudeau, and Jean Cretien and Robert Bourassa and Marc Lalonde are members of distinct societies. Mr. Speaker, somehow that logic escapes me. The hon. members who have spoken in this debate have outlined the process that they went through. I too have gone through a similar process, we all have. It is my first time speaking in a free debate where there is no party line to promote. It was sort of an unusual feeling to be left on your own to decide the merits, it

puts more responsibility on us, we have to know exactly what we are taking about. Now, Mr. Speaker, I will admit that last Sunday, a week ago this Sunday, the Premier returned from Ottawa, I had waived a little bit. Because I was afraid for my constituents. I had heard a lot of propaganda about the destruction of the nation. I had listened to the economic consequences that would happen if somehow this Meech Lake Accord was turned down. So I asked myself, can I take a chance, can I take a chance on somehow bringing harm to my constituents? And also another very real fear, Mr. Speaker, is the fear of revenge. I do not want to accuse any administration in Ottawa of being revengeful or spiteful. But that suggestion has been made. What if we were to vote against the Government in Ottawa? What would happen to our roads agreement for the province of Newfoundland and Labrador? I should hope that there would be absolutely no connection between the two. I would hope there would never be any connection. But I live in a district where three hundred kilometers of the roads are gravel, never yet been paved. And they never will be unless we can get a special roads agreement with the Federal Government. So I had to weigh all these immediate concerns Mr. Speaker, before I could make up my mind as to which direction I was going to go in. Now, Mr. Speaker, it is almost eleven o'clock and I really do not have time to get into my speech, so I will adjourn debate, and pick it up again in the morning.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: By agreement, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, at 10:00 a.m.