

May 31/90

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Martens: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my neighbouring constituency and the neighbouring high school, I want to on behalf of the member for Thunder Creek invite all the members of the Assembly through you to welcome the Central Butte grade 12 high school. They are seated in your gallery. Their chaperon today is Ron Wostradowski. They will be meeting with the Minister of Energy later on for pictures. He was slightly delayed; he's at the energy show in Estevan, and so he was unable to introduce you. But he will be here a little later to visit with you and discuss operations within this Assembly, and I want all members to welcome you here today.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Kopelchuk: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure for me once again to introduce some students from Preeceville, Saskatchewan, from the Preeceville School. They are located in the west gallery. There are 24 students from the grade 8 class. They are accompanied by teachers Lorne Plaxin and Miles Bennett; chaperons Don Bzdell, Fay Antonichuk, and Darlene Thideman; and bus driver Elgin Amy.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Plaxin brings each year his grade 8 class to this legislature and I want to recognize that fact. I would also bring to the attention of the legislature that this grade 8 class has done some environmental work. They are very concerned about the environment, as it concerns all of us, and especially as it concerns the Preeceville area. And I wanted to recognize their efforts in the environmental field.

So I would just like each and every member of the legislature to please extend a welcome to the students from Preeceville.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to draw to the attention of members of this House and introduce some special guests who are with us here from the Ukraine. They are artists who are here to perform at the Mosaic festivities which are taking place here this weekend. They come . . . the artists are sent to this country and to Mosaic every year, and have been for quite a large number of years.

So I would like to introduce to the members, Oskana Krovtytska, who's a soloist-vocalist with the Lviv Regional Philharmonic Society; Bohdan Kosopud, soloist-vocalist with the Lviv Regional Philharmonic Society as well; Yaroslav Kovalchuk, bayan player, teacher, professor assistant, and chair of folk instruments, Lviv State Conservatory; and Mykola Chubuk, head

of the editorial publications department of Society Ukrainia.

I would like members of the House to join me -- they are seated in the Speaker's gallery in the front row -- and I'd like to ask members of the House to join me in welcoming these people who are here, express our appreciation for their coming to present to us their talents and some of the culture of the Ukraine. Vitaemo.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Ms. Atkinson: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I too want to introduce some guests. Today, visiting us from the city of Saskatoon, are 44 grades 6, 7, and 8 students at Victoria School. They're accompanied by their teachers, Mr. Lemay and Ms. Ferre pé. As well, they're joined by chaperons, Mrs. Noyes and Mrs. Christy.

Mr. Speaker, as the legislature may know, Victoria School is the former school of the current Governor General of Canada, the Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn. The school has a proud history of educating many fine Saskatchewan citizens who've gone on to become well-known in Canada.

I'd like to welcome the students from Victoria School to the legislature. I hope you find the proceedings enjoyable and educational. I look forward to meeting you after question period. And have a safe journey home.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to join with my colleague from Saskatoon Nutana in welcoming the students from Victoria School. Victoria School is located directly on the boundary between Saskatoon Nutana and Saskatoon University constituency. I know that many of the students here this afternoon are from the constituency of Saskatoon University.

So it's a treat to have you travel to Regina to visit the legislature and we all hope that you enjoy your visit here very, very much. Welcome.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Goulet: -- Yes, Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce to the House some students from northern Saskatchewan. We have up in the east gallery, Mr. Speaker, 15 grade 8 students from Churchill High School from La Ronge, and also accompanying them is their teacher, Mr. Tony Oscienny, and also chaperon Donna Chalupiak.

Please welcome the students and I'll be meeting with them right after.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

#### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Provincial Funding for Agriculture

Mr. Upshall: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in absence of the Minister of Agriculture, I'll direct my question to the Associate Minister of Agriculture. Mr. Minister, today we see that your government has put in \$39 million into the federal grains pay-out. Can you tell us, Mr. Minister, where this money is coming from -- will it be borrowed or will it be coming as a result of cuts to other programs?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a happy day for farmers all across Saskatchewan with the formal announcement of the package from the federal government. Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I don't want to leave the impression with you or with other members of the legislature, or indeed with farmers across Saskatchewan, that one single program is going to make everything right relative to the farm economy in rural Saskatchewan.

Certainly this quarter billion dollars plus, Mr. Speaker, is going to be very welcome news for farmers across Saskatchewan. The Premier led the lobby and he led it successfully, and I say to the Premier on behalf of all farmers of Saskatchewan, thank you very much for that successful effort.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- There is some incremental costs to the Saskatchewan treasury associated with this payment to the farmers of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and we will be examining our options and have been examining our options relative to how we'll manage that, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: -- A new question, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, I don't know how you announce something before you've decided or vice versa. The fact of the matter is I'm sure farmers are dancing in the streets with a grand sum total of about . . . less than a dollar an acre that your government has coughed up. Now, Mr. Minister, you all of a sudden have reverted your stand that you had a few months ago when you were saying that you were . . . it was solely a federal responsibility. As usual, your principles are not held very strongly.

But I ask you: how did you arrive at the conclusion that Saskatchewan farmers, 60,000 farmers, were worth only \$39 million in government assistance?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Speaker, we were happy to see the federal government acknowledge the new initiatives in this year's budget as well as a continuation and a beefing up of past initiatives relative to our treasury backing up the farm sector and rural Saskatchewan whether it be in tax relief or in direct expenditures including new programs like the spring seeding loan, Mr. Speaker.

At the end of the day our farmers, as I said earlier . . . we might all

have wished for even a larger number, but I think given the circumstances the Premier has done a good job in delivering a substantial sum for the farmers of Saskatchewan. Indeed I would argue that the leadership role our Premier has played here has not only lead to a substantial sum for Saskatchewan farmers, but as well Alberta farmers and Manitoba farmers. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, maybe one of the options should be: I should send a bill to the Alberta treasury and the Manitoba treasury for commission for the Premier bringing home the bacon, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: -- Well, Mr. Minister, I'm sure the farmers are just very pleased to hear what you have said. You talk about your spring seeding loan which very few farmers are going to take and many don't qualify for. You talk about 80 cents an acre that you're putting in.

Well I'll tell you, Mr. Minister, you have put in \$39 million for 60,000 farmers. You put in \$370 million for Cargill. That's almost 10 times the amount. How does that show Saskatchewan farmers any fairness? How can you possibly plead poverty to farmers when you're lining the pockets of Cargill to the tune of \$370 million?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Yes, Mr. Speaker, part of our commitment to Saskatchewan farmers, and indeed Saskatchewan taxpayers and Saskatchewan young people, is to back them up with diversifying the economy and having a fertilizer plant built here for the benefit of Saskatchewan farmers. In addition to that commitment, Mr. Speaker, we outlined in the budget the over \$400 million that we will be spending, either through tax relief for farmers, tax exemption of fertilizers and chemicals and fuel for our farmers, as well as indirect expenditures, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly as I said earlier, the farm economy can use all the help it can get to fight international trade wars, the lingering effects of drought, Mr. Speaker. We've backed up Saskatchewan farmers. The Premier has successfully lobbied the federal government to provide some cash and he's brought home a substantive amount of cash for Saskatchewan farmers. And I say thanks to our Premier on behalf of all Saskatchewan farmers, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: -- New question, Mr. Speaker. You've backed up Saskatchewan farmers all right. You've backed them up the gangplank and they're dropping off one by one, and you know it.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: -- Mr. Minister, can you tell the farmers of Saskatchewan just when they're going to get this money that you haven't found yet? Is it going to come in one payment, through one cheque from the federal government, or are you going to give them their 80 cent an acre payment

through your treasury?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Relative to the timing of the payment, everyone from the outset has been working to this goal. Sooner is much better than later. The Associate Minister of Agriculture along with the Premier and Minister of Agriculture even this week have had additional meetings with the farm leaders across Saskatchewan, who have given their untiring support to bringing this payment home, Mr. Speaker. I know the Premier and the Associate Minister of Agriculture very much appreciated their support through it.

And I know that they also will appreciate their input and advice as to the make-up and the model that should be used to send these dollars out to Saskatchewan farmers, so it's done in an expeditious way and in a fair way, Mr. Speaker, who takes in the broadest possible interest, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

#### Federal Immigration Investment Program

Mr. Lautermilch: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is to the Minister of Economic Diversification and Trade. And, Mr. Minister, you will know that companies seeking immigrant investors' money must be approved by your government before being forwarded to the federal government. And you will also know that some of these companies are approved and others are not. Will you tell this House what your criteria is? What is the criteria you used for granting approval?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: -- Mr. Speaker, the immigrant investment program is a program of the Government of Canada, and they give final approval. Over the years, Saskatchewan and other provinces have built their own criteria. With respect to Saskatchewan, the main criteria over a long period of time has been the commercial viability of such a project in Saskatchewan, and this is a very general term.

Other provinces like Alberta and British Columbia, but in particular British Columbia, have set up rules restricting investment in certain things, such as real estate. And Saskatchewan is now in the process of trying to tighten up the rules so that we can have more directed investment into areas that we feel will do a broader diversification of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have another question to the same minister. Mr. Minister, I will agree that the rules should be tightened up.

I'd like to turn to the case of Upton Resources of Estevan which sought and received approval to seek some \$1.2 million of immigrant investment money.

The offering memorandum for that company, the document used to promote it to immigrant investors was filed in '89 and it lists officers of the company by name and position.

The list included Craig Dutton, the then principal secretary to the Premier. He's listed as a senior civil servant of the government. It listed former MLA, Paul Schoenhals, and he was listed as the chairman of the board of the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan; and it also listed Gerald McLellan as Ombudsman for the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Minister, that's a healthy list of people who had reason to be in constant contact and constant discussion with members of your cabinet. And many might feel that those individuals might have been in a position to influence your decisions as to who did and who didn't get approval.

My question, Mr. Minister, is what assurances can you give that there was no influence brought to bear by these individuals in the decision to approve Upton Resources' request?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: -- Mr. Speaker, to my knowledge there couldn't have been any undue influence because at the time, to my knowledge, Saskatchewan was approving everything.

Mr. Lautermilch: -- Mr. Minister, that answer just simply isn't sufficient, and I want to know what assurances there were that these people weren't lobbying your cabinet to get approval. Answer the question.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

An Hon. Member: -- This is scandalous.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: -- Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are shouting, this is scandalous. That is what they're trying to create out of nothing. The federal government makes the final decision. Saskatchewan makes recommendations. And so the final decision is not made here in Saskatchewan. All citizens in Saskatchewan can apply.

We are in the process now of trying to target the investment. In 1989 there was no process of targeting the investment. If it all looked like the citizens were honest and had not broken any laws, they were all getting approved at that time, and \$700 million worth of these funds have been approved for the province of Saskatchewan.

There is no taxpayers' money going into this. These people are raising money in Asia and it's Asians that are making the decisions on what they want to invest in. So don't try to make a scandal out of nothing. Don't try to bring that kind of garbage into the legislature.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: -- Mr. Speaker, I have another question for the same

minister. Mr. Minister, your cabinet approval, your top civil servants, Mr. Minister, how can you condone that cabinet decision? How can you stand in your place and do that today?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: -- This is a federal matter, immigration. We make recommendations. That's all we can say to the federal government is no. We cannot say yes, you have to do it. That's all we can do is recommend to the federal government that something not be approved. We are going to tighten up the rules on that even more. I mean just because some citizens of Saskatchewan apply, I mean we could go . . .

The Speaker: -- Order, order.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: -- We could bring the whole list of Saskatchewan citizens who have applied for these funds and they would read like a broad cross-section of Saskatchewan people. Simply because somebody is now out in the private sector and once worked in government and is making a living out there in the oil business, has nothing to do with the approval criteria of these funds.

There was no taxpayers' money involved. There was no influence involved. Because as I said at the outset, as far as I know, virtually everything was being okayed from Saskatchewan and Ottawa was making the decisions at the time.

Mr. Lautermilch: -- I have another question for the same minister. Mr. Minister, Craig Dutton -- I'm listing the names for you -- Craig Dutton, Paul Schoenhals, Gerald McLellan, and I have another one for you. I also want to point out that these top senior civil servants of your government were accompanied at the time -- they were employed by your government in top positions. They were also accompanied by Dennis Ball who was the chairman of the labour relations committee. And they were all substantive shareholders in Upton Resources.

Do you think, Mr. Minister, that the public will believe that these people, these friends and highly paid civil servants of your government did get treated the same as anybody else who would put in a proposal? Do you think . . . Can you expect people to believe that, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: -- Mr. Speaker, for all intents and purposes, as far as I know, at the time everybody was getting approved. And there would have to be something unusual if they didn't, or some reason that the federal government didn't approve them. But Saskatchewan was not doing the approving.

How many time do I have to tell the members opposite that dragging the names of citizens through the muck in the legislature, where they cannot sue, where they cannot defend their honest name, that is despicable behaviour on the part of the NDP. Let them go outside of the legislature

and call people crooks, but let them not do it in here where those people can't defend themselves. So why do I have to defend those people? Let them go out in the public and say what they said here and they can have it out in the public courts. This is not a matter for the legislature.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: -- My final question, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, your approval, I repeat; your top civil servants, I repeat. Do you condone that kind of action? You should be standing up here, Mr. Minister, and defending your actions because that's what we're asking you to explain. How do you condone the approval of those names, approval of your top civil servants? How do you square that with the people of this province?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: -- Mr. Speaker, immigration is federal jurisdiction in which we are allowed to have some input, but it is federal jurisdiction. These are federal decisions that are made at the federal level. These are honest, upstanding companies across Saskatchewan. This is foreign investment money, not Saskatchewan investment money.

And lastly, Mr. Speaker, this matter is not a matter that is under the jurisdiction here of the Saskatchewan government. If it were, we would speed up the immigration process so that potential investors wouldn't be waiting two years to get into Saskatchewan and help build this province. If I could do something, I would do something, and I'm doing what I can.

And his question has absolutely nothing to do with anything that's near it or important to the people of Saskatchewan. It is simply cheap muck-raking. When they have no legitimate questions, they go and rake and dig down in the dirt and that's . . . I'm sick and tired of this muck-raking.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: -- Mr. Minister, I want you to tell the people of this province whether they were required to sign a declaration of conflict of interest, and if they were, Mr. Minister, will you table those documents in this House today?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: -- For the last time, Mr. Speaker. All Saskatchewan citizens may do business with their federal government and there is no law against that. If they work for the federal government, they have to worry about their conflict of interest with the federal government. But everybody who is in Saskatchewan and is not a federal civil servant or a federal politician can do business with their federal government. That has nothing to do with any conflict of interest in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

## Saskatchewan Government Growth Fund

Mr. Mitchell: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question to the same minister but on a different subject and hopefully he'll be able to be more forthcoming or perhaps have a better knowledge of what I'm about to ask him.

We're told that the Saskatchewan Government Growth Fund, which is your immigrant investors fund, is designed to help diversify the Saskatchewan economy. And yet when I look at your offering memorandum at pages 15 and 16 under "Investment Criteria" I see the following and I quote: "Start-up businesses will be eligible for consideration but not preferred." Not preferred. That would seem to mean that it is your intention to give new businesses the lowest priority in funding from this growth fund.

How can you diversify the economy, Mr. Minister, by pumping money into existing businesses and shutting out new business? And since the fund is targeting rural areas, can you explain why it is you're putting such a restriction on the establishment of new businesses in the rural areas of the province?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: -- Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that they should bring up the Saskatchewan growth fund because the Saskatchewan growth fund is another fund of which they have been referring today about approval process. And the Saskatchewan growth fund, operated by the Government of Saskatchewan, had to be approved by the federal government. Maybe that drives the point home for them.

Now with respect to the Saskatchewan growth fund, the Saskatchewan growth fund gives the option for new businesses and for existing businesses. And the priority there is to build new jobs in Saskatchewan.

And I really don't understand what his problem is, if there is some degree of preference for rural Saskatchewan, because there will also be money put into urban Saskatchewan. And I can say that most of the applications in growth dollars are now from urban Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Mitchell: -- Interesting that you got a round of applause for an answer that didn't answer anything, Mr. Minister.

My question is why in your investment criteria, you would specifically load the dice against new businesses in rural Saskatchewan. I mean what's the purpose of that? Why would you be preferring existing businesses to new businesses in rural Saskatchewan? That's a simple question, Mr. Minister.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: -- Mr. Speaker, because there are no children watching at this time -- they're all in school -- I will answer this way. Anybody that

believes that this government is opposed to the diversification of rural Saskatchewan probably also believes in the tooth fairy.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Mitchell: -- Mr. Speaker, this is an incredible performance. This is an incredible performance by this minister. This memorandum that I'm quoting from also makes it clear that the manager of the fund, which is your Crown corporation SGGF (Saskatchewan Government Growth Fund) Management Corporation, will direct where this money is spent.

Since the manager is a government appointed and controlled body, what checks and balances are in place or do you plan to have in place to assure investors that the money is being spent in their best interests and not in the best political interests of your government?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: -- Mr. Speaker, the member opposite and I are both lawyers and now we're getting into statutory interpretation and the interpretation of the fine print of the wording of the contract and the prospectus that is before the people here. And he and I have a different interpretation of that.

I don't think us lawyers should be here quibbling about this wording here. I'm telling you what it means is that this fund is open to all of Saskatchewan for existing businesses that want to expand and for new businesses. That's what it means in plain English and he can go into his legalese all he wishes. I am saying for the people of Saskatchewan it means it's for all of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Mitchell: -- A new question to the same minister. Mr. Minister, we would get along a lot better if you would listen to my question, listen to my question.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Mitchell: -- If you can't hear me, just read my lips, as the man says. My question is: since this growth fund manager is a government appointed and controlled body, what checks and balances are in place to assure that the investors' money is being spent in their best interests and not in the best political interests of your government? What are the checks and balances?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: -- Mr. Speaker, the checks and balances are that there . . . the money isn't here yet. The money is being raised in Asia. It's not available for investment in Saskatchewan yet. And when it is available for investment, we will set up an appropriate review committee that will make the final decisions.

Right now, this is in the hands of SEDCO, which is a long-established organization that has made these kind of decisions. These decisions will be made, as they have been in the past, based on the criteria of business viability and all those other kinds of business decisions that we are used to.

The only reference to politics is this: I do not apologize that diversifying Saskatchewan is good politics. That is incidental to diversifying and building this province. And as this province becomes more prosperous, of course, they will enjoy a better life-style. They will be happier with the government, and they won't ever want to go back to what they had when the NDP planned their lives and their economy.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

DMr. Mitchell : -- A new question to the same minister. That was a little closer to dealing with the subject of my question. Not dead on, but not too bad.

Now let me get to the point, Mr. Minister. We know a lot about your track record in handling the money of the people of Saskatchewan. This memorandum, this offering memorandum of your growth fund says, and I quote:

The fund may invest in businesses in which other provincial or federal government departments or agencies have participated, are participating, or may participate directly or indirectly.

That's what you say in your offering memorandum. What is there to stop your government from taking money from this fund to invest in some of your famous, politically motivated projects like the Cargill plant or your ill-conceived projects such as GigaText or Joytec.

That's why I ask you about checks and balances. How are investments like that supposed to be solid and prudent, and how are they supposed to diversify our economy?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: -- Mr. Speaker, they will be evaluated by people who have business expertise. They will be evaluated by people in the area of business, accounting, law, finance. And when they are evaluated, the best ones will be picked, and that's where the investments will be made. And the chief criteria will be that new jobs are created for Saskatchewan citizens.

The wording of the particular prospectus really says that there will be no particular preference between existing business expansions or new ones. And so it's very simple. I can't see why he can't understand it. He's reading it right there; he should be able to understand it.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

#### Canadian Unity and Reaffirmation of Meech Lake Accord

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A motion was introduced in the Assembly the other day for debate beginning today. I understand that arrangements have been made between the respective parties for some procedures. The Premier will be speaking on the motion when he arrives back from Ottawa. But, Mr. Speaker, it deals with the constitutional crisis which faces all Canadians, a crisis which although many perhaps are reluctant to admit it, regrettably is real.

And it happens in politics from time to time, Mr. Speaker, that events or actions can take a symbolism far beyond in many cases the action or the incident itself. And I think it fair to say that when the Meech Lake accord was agreed upon some three years back, that very few in Canada thought that it was of such import that it would stretch the fabric of Canada to a surprising extent.

Meech Lake, when it was signed -- the accord was signed some three years ago -- it was signed by all premiers and the Prime Minister of Canada. It was unanimous. It was welcomed at that time, I think it fair to say, by the vast majority of Canadians and was seen as a wise and necessary step in the constitutional evolution of our country.

That is not the way the accord has evolved however. Many have legitimate concerns about the accord. Others, it's a symbol for their opposition to a national government or a provincial government. For others, and I think all members of this Assembly would agree with me, it has become, and I know I believe a very small minority, a symbol of bigotry. And that, as I say, I believe is regretted by all members in this Assembly.

It has become as well a symbol of grievances, in many cases real, by regions that have not been addressed, and a belief in some quarters that those grievances are not addressed by the accord.

It is seen I believe it fair to say by, if the polls are correct, a significant majority of Quebecers, it is now a symbol of the acceptance or rejection of Quebec by English Canada.

So what started out, Mr. Speaker, I believe, to be a unanimous document accepted by most as a reasonable provision has taken a symbolism far greater than its original intent and a symbolism that means different things to different Canadians; unfortunately, as I've said, many of them negative.

We should go back in general terms though. Why Meech Lake accord? All Saskatchewan people and all Canadians must remember that for whatever reason or reasons, the 1982 constitution when it was repatriated to Canada, Quebec was left out. Legally that constitution applies to Quebec, but the province of Quebec never gave its assent to it as the other nine provinces

had. We must remember that further constitutional reform is not possible without the willing participation of our provinces, and particularly a major province like Quebec. Certainly politically they can't be left out, and practically they can't be left out, and perhaps legally they can't be left out for many of the constitutional reforms that Canadians desire.

And I believe most strongly, Mr. Speaker, that in the long-term interest of our country there is a fundamental danger and threat to national unity if one of our major provinces is not reconciled to the national constitution. I think it's a particular danger to our country because we must recognize the realities in the province of Quebec, and that province is the only province where a separatist party is the official opposition to the government of the day.

So, Mr. Speaker, we must keep in mind the fundamental reason for the Meech Lake accord, and that was to bring the province of Quebec into our constitution and to have the province of Quebec as a signatory to the constitution.

And I don't think fundamentally, Mr. Speaker, that that objective is opposed by any in Canada, save for those that wish to have formal separation and breakup or breakaway from our country.

Is the Meech Lake document a perfect document? No. Has anyone ever claimed it to be a perfect document? No. Does it satisfy all of the constitutional demands? No, it does not. Was it intended to? No, it wasn't. It was intended, Mr. Speaker, by the first ministers of the time as that initial step to get Quebec into the constitution. And then those fundamental reforms -- many of which we will agree with, others we will have differences on -- can be dealt with in the next stages of constitutional evolution in our country.

It was never intended and certainly never seen in its initial stages as the solution to Senate reform or the question of the rights of our aboriginal peoples and several other questions, equality of women. It was never intended for that, Mr. Speaker. It was to be that first step to get Quebec into the constitution so then some of these other fundamental changes can be dealt with by all 10 provinces and the national government, not by nine provinces and the national government.

And I believe it fundamental to an analysis today, Mr. Speaker, that we keep that basis for Meech Lake very firmly in our minds. It was limited; it was not an extensive document, and yes, it was targeted to the one province that had not signed the constitution in 1982. That was its object.

(1445)

Was it reasonable? That will always, Mr. Speaker, be a matter of debate. I have difficulty with Canadians that demand a constitution be perfect. Mr. Speaker, every constitutional amendment is a fact of compromise in Canada. And when we have 10 provinces, a national government, and occasionally two territories affected, the document that results from their

deliberations is a compromise, Mr. Speaker. And a compromise is never seen and cannot be a perfect document to those who got less than they demanded or less than they wanted. And yet, that's what compromise is, Mr. Speaker. You give some; you take some, and on balance it should be fair. Is it fair that Quebec be part of the constitution of Canada? I believe that is fair.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we should keep in mind the political realities of the province of Quebec. And the Meech Lake accord was designed to meet the five conditions. And those that have been involved in constitutional deliberations for many years, Mr. Speaker, I think generally accept whether they agree with the conditions or not, that the five conditions put forward by the province of Quebec were the most moderate ever put forward by that province.

The former premier of Quebec, René Lévesque, had not five, Mr. Speaker, not 10, not 15, not 20, but 22 conditions that he had presented and demanded before Quebec would sign the constitution. And it's interesting that the five conditions in the Meech Lake accord had all been offered to the province of Quebec at various times since 1970, Mr. Speaker, many of them by former prime minister Trudeau.

So, Mr. Speaker, Meech Lake was seen as the absolute minimum for the province of Quebec. It was seen as acceptable by the then 11 first ministers. It was unanimous. It was seen as the first step to further constitutional negotiations and evolution when it made reference to items like Senate reform.

But it has unfortunately in many cases become a symbol, Mr. Speaker. Some criticisms fair, others unfortunate. But we cannot, Mr. Speaker, and I believe it important that this Assembly go on record as recognizing that it is in the best interests of Canada that all provinces be part of the constitution, having voluntarily signed the constitution.

Mr. Speaker, there are some -- and I won't go into all of them -- some specific aspects of Meech Lake which have raised opposition. Again, some fair, some bigoted, unfortunately.

Let's take the distinct society. And the distinct society has been attacked, proposals have been attacked for many reasons. But I just leave for the consideration of our people in this province, I don't know how we can fool ourselves and say that the province of Quebec is not distinct. It has been distinct since confederation. It has had distinctive powers since Confederation; it has had specific provisions in the constitution since Confederation which only apply to the province of Quebec.

Mr. Speaker, outside of the criminal laws governed by the Napoleonic code of civil law derived from France and Europe, Mr. Speaker, that has been recognized in the ability of Quebec to have three members on the final court of our country, the Supreme Court of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, it has differences, uniqueness, in for example the appointment of senators. Quebec senators are appointed by district. The individual must live in that district, own land in that district. All the other

provinces in Canada, the senators can be from the jurisdiction anywhere in the province.

There are other distinctions, but there were unique provisions for the province of Quebec from the time of Confederation. So let's not kid ourselves and say that is . . . Quebec is not distinct; it always has been.

Are we all unique? Certainly. Every other province is unique. We are all different, but the constitutional distinctiveness has in fact been recognized since Confederation. I know that clause has bothered many and I know the position of this Assembly endorsing the Meech Lake accord has not been popular, but I think most of us believe it is the right thing to do for our country.

There will be other matters to be dealt with, Mr. Speaker. Once -- if it happens -- that Quebec has signed the constitution, every province has its priorities of what it wants next. Certainly I think it fair to say that priority of western Canada is Senate reform. We believe that a reform of the Senate can begin to restore the power imbalance that exists under the Parliament of Canada. And that's certainly a belief in western Canada that it can do much to at least alleviate the grievances, actual and perceived, in western Canada.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are concerns about Meech Lake, but we should put it in perspective, as they say, the first step.

I'd like to quote if I may, Mr. Speaker, from a document, a letter, read at an important time: "I doubt, too, whether . . ." And it's with regard to a constitution.

I doubt, too, whether any other convention we can obtain may be able to make a better Constitution: for when you assemble a number of men to have the advantage of their joint wisdom, you inevitably assemble with (all) those men, all their prejudices, their passions, their errors of opinion, their local interests, their selfish views. From such an assembly can . . . (perfection) be expected?

Individual goes on:

Thus I consent, Sir, to this Constitution . . . The opinions I have had of its errors I sacrifice to the public good. I have never whispered a syllable of them abroad. Within these walls they were born, and here they shall die. If every one of us in returning to our constituents were to report the objections he has had to it, and use his influence to gain partisans in support of them, we might prevent its being generally received, and thereby lose all the salutary effects and great advantages resulting naturally in . . . favour among foreign nations, as well among ourselves, from . . . real or apparent unanimity.

And I go on:

I hope, therefore, that for our own sakes, as part of the people, and for the sake of posterity, we shall . . . heartily and unanimously in

recommending this Constitution, wherever our influence may extend, turn our future thoughts and endeavors to the means of having it well administered.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, how those words could be applicable today in drafting a constitution. It wouldn't be perfect, that if we want to walk away and disparage it, then it will have the effect of preventing a constitution from being generally well received.

That, Mr. Speaker, was a letter that Benjamin Franklin had written at the time of the final signing of the American constitution in 1787; even with his doubts, urging everyone to sign it. Mr. Speaker, it's amazing how little things change.

Mr. Speaker, I understand the Leader of the Opposition wishes to introduce some students.

Leave granted.

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Romanow: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank my hon. friend for yielding at this time in the course of obviously a very important speech and debate, but as we all know the students are here only for a short time.

And I'd like to introduce to you, sir, particularly, Mr. Speaker, and to all the members of the Legislative Assembly, a group of grade 4 and grade 5 students numbering, I'm told, 50 all told, in your east gallery, Mr. Speaker, to your right, from Saskatoon King George School.

You might know, Mr. Speaker, being an avid hockey fan that King George School of course is the home of probably the greatest hockey player of all time, Gordie Howe; Howe was a student at King George. And of course it has a long, fine tradition of school in Saskatoon and Saskatchewan, and the students here are carrying on in that tradition.

They're accompanied today by the teachers -- I hope I'm pronouncing these names accurately -- Linda Kindrachuk, Shelly Agecutay; and the chaperons are Dawn Morgan, Lani Eisworth, and Maureen Strawson.

As is the custom, I'll be meeting them at 3 p.m. So I hope the Attorney General will understand if I depart for a few moments during the course of his remarks, out of necessity. As important as Canada is, so are the welcoming of the students important. I'll be back as soon as I can to hear the balance of his remarks and then for some refreshments as well.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

#### GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Canadian Unity and Reaffirmation of Meech Lake Accord (continued)

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the Leader of the Opposition in welcoming our special guests to the Assembly.

I would like to continue with a few final remarks, Mr. Speaker. I have indicated that Meech Lake was seen as a first step. And I want to make it clear to all members, and I think we know it and certainly to the people of this province, that assuming Meech Lake to be signed, our problems aren't over, Mr. Speaker, because Meech Lake was only a first step of getting Quebec to the constitutional table.

Those that believe that if it's signed everything is behind us and we don't have to hear about the constitution any more will be sadly disappointed I believe, Mr. Speaker, because it is only a first step. And there will be intense constitutional negotiations over Senate, over aboriginal rights, rights for women, the matter of new provinces. All of these and many others, Mr. Speaker, that Canadian people will raise from time to time will be the matter of future debates.

So it is a first step and only a first step. What happens if it fails? I don't think we can say with confidence that nothing will happen. I agree with the statements made that the day after, Canada will still be here, and the day after and day after and the day after. And I don't know, Mr. Speaker, whether Canada would be strong enough to deal with the symbolism in the province of Quebec, of Canada having rejected Quebec. And whether we'd like to admit it or not, this is now a symbolism of Meech Lake.

(1500)

It will be difficult. Economic uncertainty will certainly be there even if Canada remains, Mr. Speaker. The international capital markets like stability; they do not like instability. And there will be an economic price to pay.

Those are all reasons for the speedy approval of Meech Lake, Mr. Speaker, so we can get on with these other issues of interest rates and GST (goods and services tax) and agriculture debt, and other problems of Senate reform and regional disparities. The sooner we get on with those the better, in my personal view, Mr. Speaker.

But there is no doubt that rejection of Meech Lake will cause uncertainty within Canada, and uncertainty will automatically lead to economic instability. To what extent, who knows? But I think it's a fact of life.

So having said all of that, Mr. Speaker, I urge all hon. members to adopt the motion. We recognize the seriousness of the constitutional crisis before us. And I urge all hon. members, Mr. Speaker:

that in the face of serious constitutional crisis which has already resulted in economic uncertainty and which could lead to the breakup of Canadian confederation: (1) reaffirm its commitment to the preservation of Canada and assert its determination to do all within its legal and

constitutional powers to serve that end; (2) reaffirm its ratification of the Meech Lake accord; (3) urge the political leadership of all provinces to consider the serious consequences for their people should the nation be torn apart, and; (4) emphasize the importance of resolving this constitutional impasse in order that the nation may deal effectively with further constitutional reform as well as long-term economic and social policies for the future prosperity of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, this would be a message from the legislature of Saskatchewan to all Canadians that we want to get on with the business of building Canada, Mr. Speaker. Put this behind us. Let's look to the future as one country undivided.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I so move.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Mitchell: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to say at the beginning of my remarks that I feel honoured having been asked by my caucus to begin the debate from our side of the House on this very important question.

I want also at the beginning to say how much I enjoyed the remarks of the Minister of Justice in the sense that in a very concise way he made the case for Meech Lake as it is, and defended the document as it was passed in Meech Lake almost three years ago now. And while his remarks were familiar in the sense that we have heard those arguments before, I think that he put the case eloquently and quite succinctly.

We are here with a certain feeling of unreality as we begin our debate on this motion. We think it a bit strange, Mr. Speaker, that we are here today on May 31, 1990, dealing with the subject of this motion. We all remember very clearly the discussion previously in this House leading up to the vote which this House took on September 23, 1987. And that's part of the strangeness that gives us a feeling of unreality about debating this subject at this time.

The second element of the unrealistic atmosphere that we feel in this House is what's happening in Canada today as we speak -- what's been happening in Canada for the last week or two. The country awash with rumours about meetings going on all over the country with the Prime Minister's emissary visiting the provincial capitals and then the individual premiers making their trek to Ottawa to meet with the Prime Minister.

I'm going to stop at this point, Mr. Speaker, because I've received a note indicating that the member from Kelvington wants to introduce some guests.

Leave granted.

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Petersen: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you 36 students from Foam Lake, Saskatchewan, from the Foam Lake School. They're with us today to observe the proceedings in the

Assembly. They're accompanied by their teachers: Ruth Nichol, Jim Hack, Wayne Bugera, and their bus driver, Irma Rea.

The students and I will be meeting later for some questions and some refreshments. I hope that they take note of the proceedings of the Assembly on this historic debate that we're engaged in today. Would all members join me in welcoming them here today.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

#### GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

##### Canadian Unity and Reaffirmation of Meech Lake Accord (continued)

Mr. Mitchell: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was talking about the events that have taken place in our country in the last couple of weeks. Actually it's a longer period than that. Probably the period of intense activity begun with the resolutions that were tabled in the New Brunswick legislature. That led to the federal Commons committee under the chairmanship of Jean Charest, doing public hearings and preparing a report followed by Mr. Murray's trek across Canada, followed by the premiers going to Ottawa to visit one-on-one, as they say, with the Prime Minister.

DAnd we all know that things are being discussed that relate directly to the Meech Lake accord. We all know that very high level discussions are taking place as to changes to Meech Lake. It is not clear yet to the public what form those changes will take or how those changes will be implemented nor the timetable for implementing them, but one thing is perfectly clear, Mr. Speaker, and that is that change is afoot.

And so when we are asked in this motion to reaffirm the ratification of the Meech Lake accord, we have this sense of unreality because we're pretending, it seems to me, that what's happening in Canada isn't really happening or that we don't know what's happening or that changes are in the wind. And it makes us wonder why we're here.

Now I want to return to that question a little later in my remarks, Mr. Speaker, but I thought that I should make clear at the outset that certainly in so far as the opposition is concerned, there is a real sense of unreality that we are being asked to debate this motion on May 31, 1990.

I want to begin by saying that this talk in the land about the threat to our Confederation is as concerning to me and my colleagues as it is to all Canadians. It's not the first time that subject has been raised in the history of our country; indeed it is often raised. We all remember the events surrounding the Quebec referendum where I believe that our country was engaged in the most intense examination of itself and its future that it has up to that time. And it's something of great concern to us and we don't dismiss it for a moment.

There are observers who have raised the possibility that the current crisis has been manufactured and stage managed to a certain extent. But I think, Mr. Speaker, that if you look at it objectively, a crisis is a crisis,

whether it has been deliberately and artificially created or whether it is a crisis that has arisen legitimately from the people. Fact is that if enough people think there is a crisis, Mr. Speaker, then there probably is a crisis or there's going to be one. And that of course is very concerning to us.

And we on this side of the House have, as we have so often before, expressed and wish to express our faith in the future of this country and our hope that this country will remain a united and federal Canada for time immemorial. And certainly we will be working to that end for all of the public life, I think, of all of the people on this side of the House. And there can be no question about that.

We also want this issue of Meech Lake to be resolved, Mr. Speaker. We want it to be resolved. We're not going to be there at the discussions which will take place if the first ministers get together, as rumour has it they will. But we want the first ministers to be able to find some resolution to this matter that is satisfactory to Canadians.

The minister has made the case in support of Meech Lake as it is, and I observe that in so doing he did not deal with any of the shortcomings which the popular press would lead us to believe are being resolved in these discussions between first ministers and their agents across the country. And that's a disappointment, Mr. Speaker, because we had expected that we might be made privy to a bit of a status report about what's happening or what may happen, or at least what the government hopes may happen.

And I hope that later, when the Premier speaks, that we can in fact get some indication of what is happening and how Saskatchewan views those happenings and where Saskatchewan hopes to be able to take us. Because up until this time, it is our impression that Saskatchewan has been a passive bystander to the process of Meech Lake, prepared to agree pretty much with whatever the Premier Minister wants us to agree with. And that of course is not a responsible position for a province like Saskatchewan to take.

Saskatchewan has a million very concerned people who want our constitution to include certain things and guard against certain things. And they are entitled to have the government come clean with them on the question, Mr. Speaker, and tell us what the government is going to try and accomplish in these discussions that are taking place and that will apparently take place this weekend.

I'm sure that the minister is correct when he said that the first ministers thought they were agreeing to something that wasn't very controversial. I'm sure that at least for some of them they thought that might be the case and that this amendment to the constitution might be slipped by the Canadian people in some way. And they wouldn't really notice very much. And it's Quebec's round, and after all they're only making five demands, and what's the big problem?

Well we tried in this House, in the debate in 1987, to alert the government to some of the problems. And in particular at that time, we dealt with the question of process. And I want to say a few words about process, Mr.

Speaker, because you just can't conduct any kind of rational assessment of the Meech Lake accord and the Meech Lake debate without reflecting on the process that was originally followed.

(1515)

If we learned nothing else from this Meech Lake fiasco, we have learned that there are things that you must and must not do in amending the Canadian constitution. And I think it perfectly clear, Mr. Speaker, that the people of this country have made clear that they don't want their constitution amended with the process that was followed in the Meech Lake discussions. We had 11 politicians, 11 heads of government meeting in a conference room at Meech Lake under very intense pressure in long discussions in which they did not have adequate access to their officials and were driven by the dynamics of that meeting to agree on the document which . . . substantially the document which is before us now.

Now that may have seemed like a good way from the Prime Minister's perspective to reach a deal, and we know about the Prime Minister's background and the life experience that he brought to his job as Prime Minister. And I understand that. I made my living the same way, Mr. Speaker. And that is one way to make a deal. It's the labour lawyer's way, and the Prime Minister is an exceptionally talented labour lawyer and had been through that sort of thing many times. And I say this with no particular disrespect, but he brought to constitution-making his background as a labour lawyer, and one need only look at the events at Meech Lake to see that that is indeed the model that he followed. And these 11 men -- these 11 white males as they have been perhaps unkindly referred to -- were brought together and held together until indeed they had agreed to the elements of this deal.

And with some minor modification that deal was subsequently confirmed in the Langevin block and we have the Meech Lake accord that was brought before this House in September 1987. Now that's no way to build a constitution, Mr. Speaker. And as I say, if there's one thing that we have learned from this Meech Lake exercise it is that the Canadian people don't want their constitution amended by such a means.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Mitchell: -- The Canadian people want to see a process followed which will give them some opportunity to know, some opportunity to know what's being discussed and what are the positions and what are the pros and the cons. What are the arguments for the amendment and what are the arguments against it. And they want to be able to go somewhere and express their views. They want to be able to meet with some of the decision makers and to say to them, we agree with this or we do not agree with that.

And, Mr. Speaker, if some such process had been followed in 1987 in connection with the so-called Quebec round, as I think the minister referred to it, then the whole course of this debate may have been drastically different.

But the vast majority of the Canadian people really had no idea what was being discussed at Meech Lake at all. Almost no one realized that we would see coming out of Meech Lake the kinds of things that came out of it. We did not understand when these first ministers went to Meech Lake that they would be coming back with a document which would give a veto to all provinces over certain aspects of our constitution and the amendment of those provisions. We didn't understand that, Mr. Speaker.

We've had a great deal of discussion in this country about the subject of distinct society. And as the minister correctly pointed out, that has been on the table before. We intend to discuss that a later point in this debate, Mr. Speaker, in more detail. But the fact that it was discussed doesn't mean that the country was prepared for it to come back or to be agreed upon in the way in which it was. Up until 1987 the idea of a distinct society was thought to be an appropriate term to place in the preamble of the constitution. And that was all René Lévesque asked for, for example. That's all he pressed for.

Rather, we see it now in Meech Lake come back as a pretty substantial interpretative concept. And that, I need not go into detail, has caused a fair amount of debate across this country and indeed is one of the chief grounds advanced by Premier Wells in Newfoundland for his opposition to the Meech Lake accord.

But I don't want to get side-tracked on to that, Mr. Speaker. I want to come back to this question of process. And that process or lack of process caused a lot of the suspicion and a lot of the doubts that surrounded the Meech Lake accord and indeed fed the opposition to the accord as it developed over the ensuing years.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we find ourselves near the end of the three-year period, near the end of the period in which the accord is to be approved or not approved by the provinces.

And you'd wonder whether these first ministers have learned anything, Mr. Speaker. You wonder if they've learned anything because so far as I'm aware the process that they hope to follow in bringing this thing to a conclusion is precisely the same process as was followed at the beginning. That process wasn't any good three years ago and, Mr. Speaker, it won't be well viewed now.

There are very significant elements in this country who just don't appreciate the fact that they're going to be excluded from the process again. And I would think first ministers would want to consider in what ways they could involve interest groups and other groups in Canada who have a stake in the accord and to try and bring some integrity and some public participation in the process of constitution making.

There was another problem with Meech Lake, Mr. Speaker, that has directly caused a great deal of the problem. And that is that nobody ever took the time to explain to the Canadian people why these provisions made sense. And that's a very significant and enormously important point. The Prime Minister has dealt with the subject any number of times, Mr. Speaker, but

always in terms of the consequences of not accepting Meech or the fact that this was the deal that we should accept because it would make Quebec a willing participant in the constitutional arrangements. Those are relevant observations and important observations but they didn't address the substance of the accord.

And so Canadians were left to grope and search each other's minds to try and understand why it was that a particular provision came forward in the way that it did. And why should they accept it? Why was the Meech Lake formulation of a certain concept a desirable formulation? I have yet to understand today why I should accept, for example, the limitations on the federal spending power. I mean I be prepared to do that but none of the first ministers, including the Prime Minister, has ever made the case as to why it is sensible in a federal state like Canada to limit the federal spending power in that particular way.

Now I think that it happened because of the negotiation that took place in that all-night session at Meech Lake. But it was and is incumbent upon the Prime Minister and the other political leaders of this country to give Canadians a full explanation as to the logic and the desirability of these complicated and important provisions.

I return to distinct society just to further make my point in connection with this matter, Mr. Speaker. The distinct society concept was explained in Canada by its supporters in roughly these terms. It simply recognizes an existing fact that Quebec is linguistically and culturally different than the other provinces and is for those and related reasons, a distinct grouping, a distinct society.

Mr. Vander Zalm in British Columbia says with some justification based upon that explanation of the concept, that British Columbia is a distinct society and we are all distinct societies. And in a sense we are.

That was the explanation in English Canada, Mr. Speaker. We were told that it really didn't mean anything at all, but was merely the recognition of an existing fact.

In Quebec, however, the proponents of the accord, the responsible minister and the first minister, the Premier of Quebec, were holding out that the distinct society provision was a provision of great weight, and that it was one of the features of the accord that conferred upon the province of Quebec a very substantial power which it did not previously have.

Now both those things can't be true. Either it means nothing, but merely recognizes a fact; or it means a lot, as the Quebecers think it does. But it can't mean both things. And we in Canada have a hard time sitting by allowing the . . . Canadians have a hard time just accepting that we should endorse and accept that particular wording when they don't know what it means.

And again, it was incumbent upon the Prime Minister, particularly the Prime Minister, to explain to Canadians his most informed view about what the distinct society provisions meant or did not mean in connection with the

constitutional law of this country; and whether Quebec was right or whether he was right. And if he was right, why? And give Canadians an opportunity to weigh up this provision and come to some conclusion on it.

As a result, Canadians even today don't know what they're being asked to agree to with respect to that provision. Now if we knew, Mr. Speaker, and I would say "we" I mean all Canadians, if Canadians knew exactly what that provision was supposed to be, they may all agree with it. Or if they knew, they may all disagree with it, but at least they should know what is the weight and the import of that particular provision. No one explained it to them.

And I fail to understand to this day why the federal government did not show more leadership with respect to the Meech Lake accord and try and explain to Canadians the case for accepting the Meech Lake accord.

Now as a result of these and other factors, we have all become very much aware that there are significant elements of the Canadian population which are not accepting of the accord. And indeed three provinces in this country are at the moment not accepting it. And the discussions that I referred to earlier and the meeting which may be held in a short time are intended to try and resolve those differences and in some fashion make the changes that will be necessary to re-meech Meech or to Meech again, to agree on something that will salvage the accord. Because one thing is clear and that's that Canadians are not accepting of the accord as it stands. They are in Quebec, but across the rest of this country they are not accepting of the accord as it stands.

And that is why, with respect, I was surprised to see the minister stand in this House in the province of Saskatchewan and talk to us as though none of this were known to us; as though the concerns that Canadians have were not a factor and as though people weren't taking this into account; as though three provinces weren't withholding their ratification of the accord; and indeed as the Prime Minister himself has been heard to muse -- and I'm probably quoting him incorrectly -- but I think substantially he said, Meech won't be approved as is. Something has to happen.

And yet we're being asked in this House to sort of forget all that and simply ratify our previous approval. So there's the unreality of the request that the government is making of this House is disturbing and distressing to us and we are unable to understand why we're being asked to have this debate.

(1530)

Now when this matter was before the House in September, I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, that we tried to amend the accord. First of all though, we tried to get the government to agree to a process which would allow the public of Saskatchewan to discuss the accord and make representations with respect to it. And I would bet, Mr. Speaker, that the government opposite really rues the day, really regrets the day on which it turned down that idea and decided not to cut the people of Saskatchewan into this discussion and into this debate. I suspect that they really are sorry that they didn't go that

route, as they did in Ontario, for example, where all political parties are supporting the accord and where they had extensive public hearings. But we can't take back the clock. But I just rub it into the government in a very gentle way and say that they probably rue the day in which they did not allow the Saskatchewan people to participate in that debate.

Saskatchewan people are . . . this is not their lead issue by any means, Mr. Speaker. We're facing too many problems in other areas, as we remind the government every day, for them to rank this up at the top of their list. But Saskatchewan people are concerned -- very, very concerned about this accord. And that level of concern would have been addressed if there had been a proper process followed with respect to the consideration of this accord.

You may remember, Mr. Speaker, that the second thing we tried to do was just to slow down the express here, to slow down the rush for approval until the federal, I think it was a joint Senate-Parliamentary committee, completed its consideration of the Meech Lake accord and reported on it. But we in Saskatchewan had to get it through so quickly that we didn't even wait for that.

But then we went on to deal with three specific subjects and proposed amendments to the accord dealing with those three subjects. And one was the Senate. One was the requirement that there be unanimous agreement by all of the governments in Canada to amendments affecting the Senate.

A second was provisions relating to aboriginal people, and I won't go into detail now because it's recorded in our Hansard, but that was the secondary in which we sought to amend the accord. And the third was the requirement for unanimous consent for the creation of new provinces.

Now members opposite will recognize each of those three subject areas: the Senate, aboriginal peoples and the creation of new provinces as being current issues today. As we sit here, Mr. Speaker, there are top level discussions between first ministers as to how in the world we can change the accord, or agree to companion provisions that will deal with the subjects. And I'm not being precise about how we're doing it, Mr. Minister. I recognize there's a range of possibilities there and I . . .

An Hon. Member: -- That's why you may have the accord . . .

Mr. Mitchell: -- Yes, I understand there are different ways of doing it. But the point I want to make, Mr. Speaker, is that there are three subjects that we raised in 1987 where we said there's going to be a problem here. And three years later there's still a problem there and it has to be resolved.

And if we are to have an accord in this country, it will be after something is done with respect to those three matters. And the members opposite know that, Mr. Speaker. The government knows that and especially the Premier knows that if there is to be an accord adopted it will not be the accord -- it will be a more complex situation than the simple situation that faced us in September 1987.

So when they ask this House to ratify the decision made in 1987, they are doing an unreal thing because we are faced today with an entirely different situation, where we and everyone knows that something is going to happen in the next few days if this accord has any chance of flying at all.

We would have thought, Mr. Speaker, we would have thought that we would be addressing the subject of the Meech Lake accord after, after the process that's now under way had been completed, after the amendments have been made, or after the changes have been agreed upon, or after the companion accord, or whatever form it takes, Mr. Speaker. After all that is done, then we expected this matter to come back here. That would be a real situation. That would be reality and that would be something that we would be glad to debate and debate with enthusiasm, Mr. Speaker, because that, as I say, is reality.

But here we are debating for purposes we don't even understand, something that doesn't bear any real direct relationship to the real world.

Now I listened very carefully to the remarks of the minister to try and discern from the words he used what the motive of the government is in bringing this resolution before this House. Just what in the world is the government trying to prove? They already have in their hands the vote in this House on September 23, 1987, and everybody in the country who knows about Meech Lake knows about what happened in this House in September 1987 and the vote that took place here approving the accord.

And why in the world are we being asked again today to deal with that same subject matter at this moment in our history? What is the purpose of the government in asking us to do this? As I say, Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the minister to try to understand what is that motivation, and I did not hear anything that gave me any clue as to the answer to that question. I hope when the Premier speaks in this House later today, as I understand he will, that that will become clear and we will know why this legislature is being asked to pronounce on that question again.

Now I want to just take a bit of time to look at the report of the special committee that was formed by parliament to study the proposed companion resolution to the accord that had been put forward by the province of New Brunswick. That is the so-called Charest report. And I think it's quite clear to everyone that the Charest report is not going to be accepted as it is. That is clear. But it is also clear that the Charest report kicked off the most recent rounds of discussions -- the discussions that I've been referring to -- and got people, got our attention focused on a number of key issues.

The Charest report, Mr. Speaker, deals with all of the matters which we raised in this House in 1987, as well as a good number of others. One of the subjects that it raises is the question of certainty. And I raise that with some hesitation because it's a very complex subject and I don't want to burden the House with a technical discussion now. But the minister and the government will know that the question of the certainty of the changes that are being discussed is an issue -- is particularly an issue with

respect to the province of Newfoundland and the province of Manitoba.

And I said earlier, we sincerely hope that the Premier is going to tell us and the people of Saskatchewan about what's happening and the directions in which he is thinking of taking us as these discussions go on. But one of the questions that we would like to hear from him on is the question of certainty. The minister indicated to me in a comment across the floor a moment ago that a companion accord may be, as I understood it, may be a way of dealing with this. And the question of the certainty of the contents of the companion accord actually finding their way into the constitution is an issue that I can tell the minister is very high on the minds of a lot of people who are unhappy with the accord for one reason or another.

In other words, Mr. Speaker, it will not be sufficient for the first ministers to simply get together and sort of say, well look, we might be able to do this and we might be able to do that. That would not be regarded, as I understand it, by Canadians as a sufficiently certain guarantee that these things will actually happen. And I wanted to raise that, Mr. Speaker, so that the government and the Premier in the days ahead will know that, at least in this province, that question of certainty is a question that people always raise when they talk about how this impasse might be resolved.

To put it simply, they're not just going to buy a big promise or a big reference. They're going to want something with more substance to it and some reasonable assurance in the situation that these changes will actually find their way into the law of this country, into the constitution of this country, if that's what is at stake, and that these changes will in fact be implemented.

Now the Charest report, I don't intend to go into detail about that either. But I do want to say that it does deal with the specific matter that we raised in this House in 1987 in section 9, or recommendation 9, on page 7 of the report. They deal for example with the creation of new provinces, and precisely the point that we tried to raise in this House, and recommends that this be an agenda item on the annual first ministers' conference on the constitution.

It seems clear from what we know has been happening across the country, conversations which we understand have taken place, that this question of the creation of new provinces is one of the matters that is going to be dealt with. And we understand that it will be dealt with in a way which will ensure that there does not have to be unanimous consent from all of the provinces in order to create a new province in, for example, Yukon or the Northwest Territories. That's a very important provision of course for the people who live there, but for all Canadians because hardly anybody in this country wants our constitution to be placed in the kind of a strait-jacket where it would require the consent of every province in order for a new province to be created.

We all live with the historical reality of how our provinces were created. Our province in Saskatchewan was created by a simple decision of the federal government. That's all, Mr. Speaker -- a simple decision of the

federal government acting alone. And so, Mr. Speaker, were the other provinces created from the original group that first formed Canada. Each additional province was created in the same way.

And it is grossly unfair and probably overwhelmingly unwise to now decide that we will only have new provinces if each and every other province agrees. To put it bluntly, Mr. Speaker, it is really no business of Prince Edward Island whether Yukon achieves provincehood. That is not a legitimate question for Prince Edward Island to have a veto over.

Now some other formulation of it may be possible in which the provinces will have some kind of a voice. But certainly the idea that we had to have unanimity in connection with that question was a bad idea. And certainly it appears that most people in this country have concluded that it is a bad idea including, I believe, a preponderance of the first ministers. And we certainly expect to see some change in that area.

The Charest report is very important, Mr. Speaker, on this question of process, on this question of how our constitution is to be amended in the future and as to how the first ministers will conduct themselves and steps that they'll take on the way to introducing future constitutional change.

(1545)

Now I dealt with that at some length earlier in my remarks, but I want to come back to it because it is so important. It was a major subject before the Charest inquiry. It was a major subject because it was raised by so many participants in very detailed and sophisticated terms, Mr. Speaker.

I would commend those provisions to this government for study and would urge them to adopt the ideas of the parliamentary committee. I remind them that this parliamentary committee was an all-party committee and managed to produce a unanimous report. And the provisions dealing with process are not controversial provisions. They are provisions which have not been criticized since this report was tabled, and which as far as I know, continue to receive all-party support.

I think it -- I was going to say incumbent upon the first ministers -- I would think it essential that the first ministers deal with and adopt appropriate processes for future amendments, for the consideration of future amendments to our constitution, so that never again will we have a situation like the Meech Lake accord where substantial changes like that are sprung by surprise upon the population of this country and then allowed to sit out there with very little rationalization and practically no explanation for three years while the country is being torn apart trying to understand what these provisions mean and how they will impact upon us and what they will mean for the future of this country.

This constitution, Mr. Speaker, is not the property of 11 heads of government. This constitution is not the property of governments. This constitution, properly understood, is the property of all of the people of this country, and they demand that they have a voice in its change. Now the member shakes his head. I hope he doesn't shake his head in

disagreement. The people demand the right to participate in what this constitution will say and in how it will be changed. And governments must respond to that demand and cut the people in, include the people in these discussions. And if any proof is needed beyond the reaction to the Meech Lake accord, I'd like to know what further proof you need. The people are just simply not going to take this approach any more.

Now I reiterate that we're doing it all over again. The first ministers are dealing with each other and are planning, as I understand it, to meet together to thrash it out one more time. And again they're going to do it by themselves behind closed doors, without including anybody.

I understand. I understand as well as anybody does the difficulty involved in the idea of including people in deliberations such as constitutional change. I understand the difficulties. But the people insist on it, and we have to find ways to include them. We have to find ways to allow them to participate, and we've got to do it this time too.

An Hon. Member: -- We can't be captives of special interest.

Mr. Mitchell: -- The minister says we can't be captives of special interest, and that's, you know . . . governments can't be captive of anybody. Governments have got to be able to govern. But governments have to allow special interests to have their say, and they have to relate to them and dialogue with them and understand them, and then make judgements with respect to that. And they can't just go away somewhere and lock the doors and make a deal without including these people.

And if we've learned one thing from the Meech Lake fiasco, Mr. Speaker, it is that that we have learned. Now Charest talks at length about this subject and includes many very useful suggestions as to how we do this in the future.

Now the Charest report talks about the federal spending power, and I said to the House that I approach that subject, which is very complex, with some trepidation. It was one of those slowly developing issues in the Meech Lake discussion. It wasn't the first thing on people's minds when they began to see things in the Meech Lake accord that worried them. But it is an enormously important provision, and it has to be explained to people. And it has to be dealt with in some manner, I believe, in the discussions that are going on right now.

The Charest committee asks in recommendation 22 that the first ministers provide in a companion resolution, reassurance that the federal spending power to promote equal opportunities for the well-being of Canadians . . . Let me just . . . I'm getting the wrong emphasis there, Mr. Speaker, so I want to make sure that I'm clear as to what I'm saying. I'll just quote it without trying to paraphrase it:

Your Committee urges the First Ministers to provide in a Companion Resolution reassurance that the federal spending power to promote equal opportunities for the well being of Canadians and to further economic development to reduce disparity and to provide essential public services

of reasonable quality to Canadians (as set out in Section 36 of the Constitution Act, 1982), will not be impaired by the Meech Lake Accord.

Now that's a very important provision from this all-party committee and it legitimizes the concerns, Mr. Speaker, that were around the country: in Manitoba; in New Brunswick; to some extent in Newfoundland; certainly in Saskatchewan as we discussed the Meech Lake accord with people over the last three years. The fear is that by limiting the federal spending power you limit the right and the power of the national government to implement national programs.

We look, for example, at the national medical care program and the hospitalization program and programs like that, and we ask ourselves whether under Meech that would be possible. Now there is a debate about that and I recognize that. Ontario came to one conclusion; Manitoba came to another. But it is a dispute, Mr. Speaker. It is a concern about Meech that the committee underlines, that the parliamentary committee underlines in recommendation 22 and urges the first ministers to provide some reassurances to the Canadian people that the federal spending power is still capable of producing certain results. And I urge the government to pay particular attention to that in the days that are to come.

Now I would also hope to hear from the Premier what position Saskatchewan will be taking in the negotiations with respect to the Senate. Now we know that this remains an issue. We read in the papers, with some surprise I think, that it is the biggest issue remaining. And the issue there is, as I understand it, whether Senate reform will require unanimity or whether Senate reform can be done under the old constitutional amending provision.

And it is a subject that we would like to hear from the government with respect to. We would like to know where Saskatchewan stands on that issue and how hard you're prepared to push it. Does Saskatchewan, for example, share the views of Alberta who made it perfectly plain that they must have movement in this area in order to . . . for their part in the discussions which are to come up? And that of course, Mr. Speaker, is in pursuit of their desire for a triple E Senate. That will be a subject that no doubt people in this legislature will be debating at an appropriate time.

But the point is that under the Meech Lake provisions, the Senate, the question of reform of the Senate is being put into a constitutional strait-jacket. By that I simply mean that it is going to require unanimous consent to agree to modifications or reform of the Senate, and the government will know that members on this side of the House have one very, very simple answer to the question of Senate reform and that is to abolish the bloody place -- think it should have been abolished years ago, think it should have been abolished years ago -- and we still think that. But even that won't happen, as compelling a case as can be made; for Senate abolishment is not going to happen under a constitution that requires each and every province to agree to it. Because there are provinces, of course, who will want to maintain it.

We have to be very careful, Mr. Speaker, members of the government, we have to be very, very careful about the way in which we lock these things in and

lose our ability to deal with those constitutional provisions in the future as circumstances change. And one thing we know, Mr. Speaker, circumstances will change. They will change dramatically, and we in Canada have to preserve our ability to respond to those changes, and we can only do that if we deliberately set about writing those provisions into our constitution. And the government will, I hope, be forthcoming with us on this question.

I want to just go back to that, one more minute, Mr. Speaker, because the Premier will be addressing us in short order. And I want to, through you, Mr. Speaker, to ask the Premier when he addresses this House to let us know what is the current status of discussions and to let us know what is being discussed and what Saskatchewan is proposing and how it appears that this thing will be coming out.

All of Saskatchewan knows that discussions are going on. We hope that our Premier is involved in these discussions, and we would ask the Premier when he addresses this subject to include Saskatchewan, to take

DSaskatchewan people into his confidence and to share with them what's happening and how he thinks it will go and what positions he's going to be advancing on their behalf.

We are being asked in this resolution to endorse or re-endorse, re-ratify an accord that has already gone through this House, and we are engaged in that respect in a very unreal debate. And the Premier can bring some reality to it by very simply standing up in this House and telling us what's happening. We have a right to know that, the Saskatchewan people have a right to know it, and I hope that the Premier will frankly and openly address these subjects.

It is a fact, Mr. Speaker, that the Saskatchewan people have not been adequately consulted with respect to the Meech Lake accord. There are matters now being discussed in which they are not being consulted again. These are matters in which they have a very deep interest, and we await a full report from the Premier as to the current status of the Meech Lake accord.

We would also like to hear from the Premier as to why we in this legislature are being asked again to rehash old straw. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

(1600)

Hon. Mr. Devine: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my distinct pleasure to rise in the legislature today to speak about an issue that is extremely important to the people of Canada, and indeed to the people of the rest of the world, as they watch Canadians examine and struggle with the very fabric of our nation.

The motion before us today is designed to affirm our belief and our unwavering support in the great country of Canada, in our nation. And we

want to reaffirm the constitutional accord that we signed, and I signed, and that this legislature passed. It has been a profound historical, national, and international significance that this country is now prepared to have all provinces part of its constitution.

It is important at this particular time that we stand up and be counted in Saskatchewan, we be counted on the side of Canada -- one Canada from Atlantic to Pacific. A generous nation, people from all ethnic origins from all over the world who are prepared to show the world in a democratic fashion that we are open, we are tolerant, we are compassionate, we are generous, and we've built a fantastic nation, a warm nation, a proud nation, a competitive nation, democratically and openly and freely at a time when the world in fact is moving towards democracy and needs models, needs examples. This nation can stand now firm, defending our constitution, defending our democracy, and defending our history, and most of all defending the opportunities in the future for our children.

We must tell the country, Mr. Speaker, where we stand. This legislature must tell the country where we stand. We must tell the rest of the nation that we keep our word, Mr. Speaker, that when this legislature says that we endorse the constitutional accord and we pass it and we agree with it and we sign it, that we keep the course. When Saskatchewan people give their word and they sign a constitutional agreement, we have to let the rest of the country know today, let them know now at this time of historical significance, particularly when we're so close to having a constitutional amendment passed that would be significant for all of us in the future and yet so close to watching us tear ourselves apart.

It's extremely important that the rest of the country know where we stand. We believe in one Canada and we believe in our word and we will stay with our word, Mr. Speaker. We will defend the nation, we'll defend the principles of democracy and tolerance, and we'll not settle for anything less, Mr. Speaker.

We don't want a smaller Canada. We don't want a lesser Canada. We don't want a Canada that is fractured. We don't want part of a Canada. We want Canada as we see it today -- coast-to-coast-plus, stronger, wiser, going into the 21st century with confidence and with all the players with equal opportunity to build and to be part of a great century that is before us.

When we keep our word, Mr. Speaker, we have to make sure, and I'm sure that we can, rise above any partisanship that may be tempting us in any part of Canada. We are Canadians first. We're going to call on all people in public life to reach for the statesman in each and every one of us. We don't want to flirt with a smaller or a lesser Canada. We will be counted, and on that score, Mr. Speaker, we will not bend.

The people of Saskatchewan and the people of all the provinces in this great country must be prepared to stand up and say: I love this nation as it is and I want to see it grow stronger and stronger; I will not succumb to radicals; I will not succumb to those who would want to pull us apart. And they must be courageous enough and we must be broadminded enough to find those solutions so indeed, Mr. Speaker, this country can continue to

make its mark in the world.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: -- It's particularly important that the people of Saskatchewan do know -- and I heard the hon. member speaking -- know where we are today with respect to the constitutional negotiations. The people of Canada need to know and particularly those people in Manitoba and Newfoundland need to know how Saskatchewan people will feel and how this legislature will respond to the fact that the nation does need us as much as we need the nation.

This country needs us now and now we need this country to be strong. We need this country to be strong, and I believe not only for ourselves, but indeed for the rest of the world. And the world that has not been free needs to know that Canadians, in view of democracy and in the view of all the difficulties in managing people with their free will, that we have the compassion and understanding and tolerance and wisdom to make it last, to make it stay.

I think it's fair to say, Mr. Speaker, that not one of us here in this room or not one of us in Canada today built this nation, but any one of the first ministers could be responsible for tearing it apart. Each of us can help, however, keep the country together. Each of us in our own way, not only in the legislature, but across this great province has the opportunity to speak up and to stand up for the nation they love, for the nation they were born in or the nation they immigrated to, the nation where they raised their family and are raising their families now.

And the great love and affection we have for our parents and our grandparents and all of that history that is in our veins today as I speak can come forward from people, all parts of Saskatchewan and indeed all parts of the country. And you can speak up and you say, this nation is more important than anything that we can think of with respect to constitutional wrangling or particular words in front of other words or dotting an "i" or crossing a "t". It's the spirit, it's the soul, it's the good will, it's the generosity, it's the tolerance, it's what we can be and have been.

And we can speak up and we can ask our MLAs to speak. We can call our members of the legislature and our MPs and say, you defend Canada. Each and every one of us, Mr. Speaker, has a responsibility to do that now because indeed the nation needs us. As some in some provinces stand there and say, well I wonder how Saskatchewan feels about Canada, we should let them know unequivocally that we back this great nation and we love this great nation and we will not see it tore apart, Mr. Speaker, and we will stand full bore in favour of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, very briefly, and we've been through it here in the legislature before, when we introduced the resolution and the constitutional amendment called the Meech Lake accord, we find out that we have a process that's been incomplete. We brought home to this country the constitution in 1982 and with honourable objectives.

And because of certain circumstances, particularly because of a government in Quebec that was bent on separation, when the leaders of the day brought home the constitution under the chairmanship and leadership of Prime Minister Trudeau, one province was left out of the constitution -- would not sign on in terms of being part of the patriation of the Canadian constitution home. Twenty-five per cent of our population was left out.

Now hindsight may say it was a mistake. Maybe it was, maybe it wasn't. But we can debate that. I'm not here to debate that today. It's just a fact. It's just the truth is that Quebec could not sign on and we left out 25 per cent of our population.

Since that time, Mr. Speaker, we have set out to remedy that. And that's been an honourable objective -- remedy the fact that 25 per cent of the Canadian population, represented in Quebec, is not part of the Canadian constitution in terms of signing on and being part as we know it today.

The objective, Mr. Speaker, was to get Quebec to join the constitutional family and then get on with many other things, including Senate reform, bringing in new provinces, forms of aboriginal government, all the things that we might like to do to modify our constitution if in fact all of us are players. It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to do those things leaving out 25 per cent of the population to start with. The objective was to bring Quebec into the country, to make sure that they were part and parcel of what this great nation could be.

Well through a process, Mr. Speaker, we narrowed down all the requests -- and certainly the Leader of the Opposition is familiar with them -- that Quebec had at one time from 20-some down to five. And we've had meetings after meetings across the country and we all finally agreed, Mr. Speaker, on five points suggested by Quebec and discussed across the country that would bring Quebec into the constitution.

And very, very simply put, we recognized French-speaking people. We recognized the fact that about 25 per cent of the population of this country lived in a community that spoke almost entirely French and said that's a fact of life. They speak French in Quebec. And we said that should be recognized; it is a fact they do. They speak French. They have French culture -- different culture, different law; they have senators by district -- a different way of life associated with their language and their culture. We said we'll recognize that as being part of something special in this great nation of Canada.

That was the key; that's the whole key to recognize the fact that in this sea of English in North America and literally in the world, there is an island in Canada, a French-speaking people who are part and parcel of this great nation, have been since it began, and they do speak French. Mr. Speaker, it was to identify the fact that these people wanted to be recognized for the fact that they have roots, they have culture, they have different laws, but they're very, very much a part of Canada, within Canada.

And at the same time, Mr. Speaker, for those of us that really wanted to see significant reform, particularly in the way we govern ourselves across the country, we said, provinces that are smaller than Quebec, provinces that are smaller than Ontario, like Saskatchewan, or like Alberta or P.E.I., we want as much power as you do, as the larger ones, in making these changes in major institutions. We want as much power as you do, as much say when we come to modifying the Senate. And what that was, Mr. Speaker, was the same power when it comes to making those final decisions, in other words a veto for Saskatchewan that matched the veto for Quebec that matched the veto for Ontario or anybody else, Mr. Speaker.

We put those combinations, five major points -- and we went through others and I could go through them, but I'm sure the House is familiar; we've been in the record and read into the record before this Assembly -- we put them before the people in terms of the legislatures, Mr. Speaker, and it passed every jurisdiction.

The first to pass outside the province of Quebec was here in Saskatchewan and it was supported by the majority of people in this legislature, supported at that time by the leader of the opposition, Mr. Blakeney, and he spoke about the process. And I've looked at his notes today to remind us -- and I might not have time to do it today --

About the need to do just that: bring this constitutional amendment before the House, make sure that Quebec is part of the country so that in fact we can finish the job that was started in 1982.

And he spoke eloquently about that. He agreed with the fact that we were doing it and he voted for it. I just mention that because it's important to know that the majority of the people in this Assembly did support the constitutional accord and the Meech Lake accord because it was good for Canada at that time as it is now, Mr. Speaker.

But we didn't only pass it. It passed in eight other jurisdictions in this country. And by the combination of events, what happened after that is that there were a couple of elections in two provinces and then the process started to unravel because they didn't know whether they would pass it or not. We gave ourselves a three-year time frame to get it done, debate it, take it to all the legislatures and make sure in fact people could talk about it and review it and examine it and address it in all 10 legislatures and the Parliament of Canada, pass it and it would be the law of the land.

Well we're here again, Mr. Speaker. The Prime Minister has now called a first ministers' meeting for Sunday evening. All the first ministers will gather again to see if they can finally resolve any differences that are left outstanding, particularly with respect to Quebec being distinct in terms of its language and culture and in terms of its amending formulas -- any amending formula that we might look at with respect to Senate reform.

Let me just say, Mr. Speaker, that I believe it's extremely important that this item is addressed now on the eve of the first ministers' meeting because of its significance for the nation. If we reject this constitutional accord, if it falls apart, some would say, so what? It's just an amendment to the constitution; we'll just try it again; no big

impact on anybody in my particular community or my farm or any place else.

Mr. Speaker, nothing could be farther from the truth. This amendment and the passage of this amendment is extremely important for the nation, for our future, and the attitude and the framework within which we build for the 1990s and the 21st century.

(1615)

But let me say, if it fails, this country will never be the same. If we reject this constitutional accord, the people of Quebec, Mr. Speaker, will have every excuse you can imagine to reject Canada as their nation. And that is very significant because this accord has a life of its own now in this nation. It has a life of its own. From coast to coast people are talking about the fact today, and I've been back and forth across the country several times recently. They're saying, Mr. Premier, whatever it takes, save the country.

Quebec people are saying, we've tried and we've tried and we've tried and we've got your blessing. We've received it, it's passed legislatures, and one more time you seemed to be that close in making us part of this constitutional family, and yet it's like we have to be frisked again as we come through the door of the nation, one more time.

Well that's the way they feel about it, Mr. Speaker. They feel that they're being frisked. Every time they come up to be part of the country and walk through that door, we have to strip them one more time and say, what is it about your French or about your language or about your culture, about your community, about your senators? Tell me one more time.

And they are saying, Mr. Speaker, enough is enough is enough. Now I don't have to speak on their behalf. I'm sure that if you go into Quebec you can find out. I'm sharing my feeling with the people of Saskatchewan. The people of Quebec can't tolerate one more rejection. One more rejection and they will say this country is not ours; this is not a country that we believe in, that we can be proud of; it is a country that has rejected us time and time again.

They will reject Canada as their nation, Mr. Speaker, because we didn't speak up, Mr. Speaker. And what will that mean? It means the Canada that we know pulls apart. It means every conceivable disruption that you can imagine in terms of our economy, in terms of our political will, in terms of our interprovincial movement, in terms of our international reputation, in terms of interest rates, in terms of consequences in the St. Lawrence Seaway, in terms of everything that you can imagine.

When a country says I am not going to stay together, I am going to be fractured and I will have a different bilateral policy out of this region and a different interprovincial policy out of another region, and I will represent different views in different parts of the world, and we will be in a constitutional and economic and political wrangling mess and washing our linen in the public view of the world for years and years to come.

For what? For what? Because we didn't say that most of the French-speaking people in the nation live in Quebec? They do. That's a fact. And they have French culture, French law, and their senators are appointed different and it's unique in this nation. We're going to pull ourselves apart because that's not the fact? I don't think so. We can't do that.

Whatever it takes out of this legislature and out of the people of Saskatchewan and the people of Canada, we have to say no to that nonsense. What's more, we have to say no to the radicals that tease us with that and tempt us with that.

There are people in Quebec who want separatism and want Quebec to be alone and want Quebec to be separate and be their own nation, and some of them are very radical. And every time somebody in English Canada does something that says, well, I don't want any part of Quebec or I'm, you know, wipe my feet on you or I'm going to say no, I'm just . . . just one language in this country, the radicals in Quebec go like this and say, ah, we got them going. Now we'll win. We'll get to their intolerance. We'll get to their feeling of prejudice and we'll push them and push them until they finally push us right out of the country.

I don't like to lose. I know members in this legislature are competitive. I never like to lose. And I certainly don't like to lose to somebody that's irrational or radical. And this nation should never lose to somebody that's radical. We should stand up for all the goodness, all the heart, all the soul, all the love, and all the affection, and all the growth and all the peace and all the things this nation has fought for through two world wars -- all of the things that we want to be and have been and can be, and never let radicals tear us apart.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: -- Mr. Speaker, people respect Canada all over the world. I had the opportunity just yesterday to meet with one of the most significant world leaders that we know of today, President Gorbachev of the Soviet Union. When he comes to speak to Canada as a nation -- and I talked to his first ministers and I met with his chief economic advisors -- they look to Canada for examples.

I had the opportunity to meet with the Canadian-U.S. studies in intergovernmental relations in Moscow, and they look to Canada for examples of democracy, freedom, how communities and provinces and regions can live together under confederation. They look to us for economic models, for health care, for education, for bilateral, multilateral trade, how to deal with the world of convertible currencies, how to farm, how to manage, how to market -- they come to Canada.

How do we deal with people all across the world? And somebody mentioned on the other side, how to privatize. And of course they're going to privatize 40 per cent of their country.

Mr. Speaker, this nation of Canada is an example and is a symbol for the

rest of the world. We deal with people that have come from all over the world and we welcome them warmly. We have the capacity to go through and provide one of the best examples and role models for a young democracy that you would find any place in the history of the world.

We may be, we just may be the most fortunate nation that has ever been built. It's been peaceful. It's been open. It's been clean. It has every opportunity, Mr. Speaker. And we have an opportunity now to not only hold it together but to put it in fine shape so that we can continue to have an instrumental role in guiding the world, not in an undue way but in a modest way given our modest population size -- tiny frankly -- but that the fact that we are respected internationally, politically and economically, socially and culturally, we can mould the world in a fashion that could be better because of our own understanding and our own example of compassion and tolerance and generosity.

Now what we have before us, Mr. Speaker, in this constitutional accord and the reaffirmation of our love for the nation and our reaffirmation of this constitutional accord is symbolic. What the people of this country are looking for, and particularly the people of Quebec, is a symbol of our compassion and our understanding and our willingness to take everybody from coast to coast in and make them part of the family.

This constitutional accord has become extremely symbolic. It's on the lips and the tips of the tongues of people all across this nation. It says this means Canada. This represents all Canada wants to be and this represents the future for what the nation can be. And it is symbolic. It is not the legal nature of it. It's not the constitutional expertise. It's not all the i's and all the t's and all the words; it is the symbol of the heart and the soul of the nation -- is this what we can be.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it is a time when we have to tell the rest of the world that this symbol is us. We gave our word and we're going to stand full bore behind the nation and behind our word. It's time again to clarify the fact that we believe in a nation that has all the regions and all the provinces duly part of the country.

You know, it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, that we've had some pretty heated debates in this legislature, some recently with respect to trade, and particularly the bilateral trade agreement with the United States and there's been fair argument on both sides.

The free trade agreement, Mr. Speaker, was one that was debated. And if it's fair to say -- and certainly I suspect others would acknowledge that one of the major hesitations people had about the fact that there was a free trade agreement is that we might be vulnerable to U.S. people coming in and taking us over or taking over companies or taking over a region or taking over a province because we dropped the tariffs and we'd be just vulnerable to U.S. action. And I've heard that from particularly men like Mel Hurtig and some others.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's fair today to say this country has never been more vulnerable. This country has never been closer to pulling itself

apart and being weaker socially, politically, culturally and economically in its history than right now as I speak. We are very, very close, Mr. Speaker, to being so vulnerable to outside influences, to our own inability to finance ourselves, to showing a complete lack of confidence in ourselves, and then outside investors are going to say, we're not confident in you either. We are very vulnerable to all that, Mr. Speaker.

I say to those people, who were worried about free trade, saying that we would be taken over by United States and others, I said that's tiddly-winks; that's kindergarten compared to how vulnerable we are now to all kinds of outside forces.

And I ask those people that were fearful about Canada being strong and independent to stand up now in front of their colleagues around the province and around the nation and say: this country must be strong; this country is not going to be weak; this country is not going to be subject to international take-over because this country is not going to pull itself apart. This country is going to be one from coast to coast.

It's time for all those people that had any fear at all of American or foreign or any other take-over capacity to speak now and speak up and say, defend this nation, keep it strong from coast to coast. We can defend ourselves; we can be financially independent, politically independent.

And, Mr. Speaker, we cannot be financially independent if we are not politically independent and politically strong. And I mean that from coast to coast in this democracy, not a western Canada and a central Canada and a Quebec and the Maritimes and somebody else and different relationships bilaterally and multilaterally all over the world. The country of something called Saskatchewan wouldn't be anything close to the country known as Canada. The country of Quebec would be nothing like the country of Canada. And the country of any other form wouldn't be anything like it. Anybody who ever had any single fear of anybody else having any overdue influence should stand up now and say for this nation as a free \_trader world-wide, we need to be one.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: -- Mr. Speaker, the world is watching Canada -- Americans are watching as we go through this struggle, Europeans are, people in the Pacific Rim -- people who envied the relationship that we had with those all over the world in administrations from all political persuasions.

We as this nation have been through two world wars, defending democracy and freedom. We've traded with the Soviet Union as a communist country, we've traded with China, we've traded with people in South America and Africa. We've traded with people all over, in every possible combination of governments, and we've always represented a pureness, a newness of hope, of fairness, compassion, competitive, honourable, and most of all, we've demonstrated a capacity to take people from all of those countries we trade with, from every corner of the globe, pull them together, make a democracy and be tolerant and understanding with all of those people. Admired!

We've been and we've twinned with provinces in China and they visited here and we even had the Speaker of the Communist Party of China here, he spoke. And he spoke of your role, Mr. Speaker, remember that? This young nation, he said the Speaker's role, and he was obviously looking forward to some democracy, looking forward to some openness. Well, even in their darkest days, after something like Tiananmen Square, people turned to places like Canada, and the country like this to say: that's what we want to see. You are so strong in your defence of democracy and liberty; you are so tolerant at the same time. We emulate you.

(1630)

Mr. Speaker, at this time, when this country is so close to giving that up, I appeal, I really appeal to Saskatchewan people and Canadians from coast to coast to stand up for Canada, to say to this nation and to say to the rest of the world that needs an example -- we are far too mature, we have seen too much responsibility for our youth in this world of global events to even flirt with the idea that we could let our neighbours go, or 25 per cent of our heart and soul even do something else, over virtually constitutional scrabble. What word, what place, how, now, where?

The onus is on us all, Mr. Speaker. I believe, and I honestly believe this, we have been blessed with a nation that is so bountiful it's unbelievable. I can't think of a better time to have lived. I can't think of a better place to have lived than right now in Canada. It gives us every opportunity to be anything and everything that we'd want to be. And it also allows us to lead.

I believe that the good Lord had a special time for the people of the earth when he carved out this nation, this northern half of North America. It is so unique and so special that people all over the world smile when they see the Canadian flag on a knapsack. It can go any place. They greet a Canadian like this not because he's English, not because he's French, not because he's from any particular part of the world whether it's Irish or Ukrainian or from Japan or from Latin America, but because they're Canadian. And they know that we speak French and English.

Mr. Speaker, this country needs this legislature, it needs me, to speak on its behalf. It needs all of us to stand up and say we affirm our belief in one nation from coast to coast, and we reaffirm this constitutional accord which will finally, finally bring Quebec into the constitutional family. We need to do that now so there is no doubt any place across this nation -- and I hope other legislatures follow -- no doubt that we want this nation to stay one and to stay strong.

Mr. Speaker, I love this country. I love it very much. I want my children to have the opportunity to be all the things that they can be in a free and beautiful democracy called Canada. I want my children to have the opportunity to grow, to learn, to represent themselves and this nation all over the world. We need to draw on each other's strength and understanding. We need to cut across partisan lines. We cannot, we cannot let this constitutional amendment fall.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the legislature, sincerely as I can ask them about anything, to stand up for Canada, to stand up for this country, to stand up for all the things that it's meant to them and all the things that it can be, and to join people like our national leaders from all political parties.

And I will say to the hon. member, I sincerely congratulated Ed Broadbent yesterday for his profound speech to the Dalhousie University reported in The Globe and Mail. And I meant it sincerely . . . and all the leaders from all political parties and all the people that have been involved in this across the nation.

I call on all members of the House to show their love for the country, their love for the province as part of this big country, their love for each part of the nation, by standing up for Canada and reaffirming our belief in this nation and in this accord. Mr. Speaker, I love this country. This country needs us. God save Canada.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've listened to the Premier's contribution to this debate. And I want to say right from the very outset, lest there be any misinterpretation on his part or on anybody's part, there isn't anybody in this Chamber that doesn't love Canada for even some of the reasons that the Premier had advanced, maybe other reasons.

People who love Canada in this Chamber in the face of major economic initiatives such as the Canada-United States free trade deal which poses, in my judgement, the grave danger of tearing asunder this great country of which the Premier professes his love. We still love this country, notwithstanding such dramatic and major initiatives, and I don't think that that is an issue in the consideration that we have before us today.

We're all committed to a strong, united Canada. We all have our own reasons for being so committed. And I think it goes without saying that we should be able to, as Canadians who love the nation and wish to maintain its integrity and its independence and its vibrancy, have the right as well as part of the love for Canada the Premier talks about, to be able to genuinely discuss constitutional arrangements and ask ourselves whether or not they will permit the nation to be that united, vibrant country that we all love, without being cast in a position of somehow being less than patriotic or less than committed to the nation that we discuss.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, before I go to some substantive rebuttals -- I don't have any printed text in front of me; I've just taken some notes of the Premier's address -- I think one of the most disturbing aspects of the debate which has taken place in Canada the last several days -- probably as a result of Mr. Bouchard's defection from the Mulroney government and his call for independence in Quebec, something which he called for as a separatist supporter in the 1980 referendum in Quebec -- but since that period, Mr. Speaker, there has been a tendency in the minds of journalists -- thankfully not all, but unfortunately too many in the country -- and

others which has handicapped the capacity of the nation to continue to intellectually and rationally and calmly and coolly discuss the concepts of Meech Lake and Quebec and western Canadian interests in some sort of an emotional spirit. That it doesn't much matter what is in the Meech Lake accord, what really matters is that there be an accommodation with Quebec at any cost, at all cost, even if the accommodation with Quebec might eventually lead to the destruction of the country of which the Premier professes such great love.

And I think that this is an atmosphere which is not only unintellectual, it's an atmosphere which is unanalytical; it's an atmosphere in many areas which is wildly inaccurate by almost any interpretation of constitutional law in the history of the province of Canada. It is extremely simplistic, it's jingoistic, and it's extremely dangerous.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- It is, Mr. Speaker, to emphasize as my preliminary remarks just very briefly, it is I think a regrettable situation and a state of affairs that we have in Canada the bureaucrats of the largest province in this country preparing a strategy based on that emotionalism and that jingoism, basing a strategy which will, in effect, categorize those who have legitimate questions about Meech Lake as being something less than patriotic.

I refer here to a Globe and Mail story yesterday and today where the province of Ontario, at a high senior officials' level, documented an approach of manipulation of the media, journalists and the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) in particular. The purpose would be to undermine the credibility of Manitoba's Gary Filmon, New Brunswick's Frank McKenna, and Newfoundland's Clyde Wells.

I'm reading now from the report, Mr. Speaker:

The document (prepared by the senior Ontario people who undoubtedly loved this country) recommended that Mr. Filmon be portrayed as "politically erratic," "inconsistent," and "unpredictable," and that Mr. Wells's concerns about the accord be described as "out of proportion" and arising from an "overweening lack of trust." And Mr. McKenna was to be portrayed as "part of the problem" if he did not act quickly to have the Meech Lake accord ratified by this province's Legislature.

And on it goes.

Somebody said that Peterson has fired the civil servants responsible for that document. If that's true, I commend the Premier of the province of Ontario. That should have been the result.

But, Mr. Speaker, the point that I wish to make is that document should never have arisen as a strategy of a responsible provincial government, but that it arose because there has been created purposefully in this country over the last 10 days or so, an atmosphere of emotionalism and hysteria about the future of the country to which I must sadly say the Premier

contributed in his message today, which prompted civil servants in Ontario and elsewhere to devise strategies to categorize and to chastise those of us who have legitimate concerns about constitutional reform as being somewhat as unpatriotic. And I say that leads us nowhere to the resolution of Canadians' problems and our difficulties. I say that is not displaying a love of Canada; that is displaying a contempt of Canada and our basic principles of democracy.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- And so, Mr. Speaker, it isn't surprising that journalists in this province and elsewhere have fastened on, and understandably so, to the portrayed grave consequences of a failed Meech Lake agreement. Who wouldn't be concerned about that? I don't mean to be accusing the journalists of any improper motives. There are days, hours, when I worry about the consequences of where this current debacle of constitutional negotiations has led us and the future of this country.

But I do say that in this kind of emotionalism and in this kind of an atmosphere, we should begin to analyse how it

Dis that we got there, how it is that we arrived at this situation. Were the negotiations conducted constructively and positively and thoughtfully? Will the solutions work to keeping the country of Canada united 25 years from now?

And to question critically whether or not it is legitimate in the democratic system to blame those of us and others who have legitimate concerns -- whether it is a proper function to blame people elsewhere who are sticking to their guns based on some attitudes of constitutional reform. I don't think it is, Mr. Speaker, and I think in that regard, this debate in this session today is somewhat surrealistic and unrealistic as my colleague, the member from Fairview, has indicated.

Mr. Speaker, I want to move to a second point. I alluded to this in the first observation. Mr. Speaker, this is not a time for emotionalism. This is not a time for passionate speeches about love of Canada. This is a time for the leaders of our government, our Premier, to be talking compromise.

It is a time for our leaders not to be hardening the positions in this country. It is not a time for the leaders of our country to say, Meech or nothing else, and equate that with Canada. Because to do so, as valid or as invalid as their arguments might be, invariably casts them on the side of one aspect of the debate to the exclusion of the other legitimate Canadians who have other legitimate views on the other side of the debate.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- And when premiers or ministers come to any legislature anywhere in Canada and heap on emotionalism and wrap themselves in the Canadian flag and do so in this kind of an emotional stance, they do so, Mr. Speaker, because they have turned their back on what has kept this country together -- and that is compromise, compromise, compromise, to the 11th hour, to the 11th hour and the 59th minute. And that's been the

history of keeping this country together.

In past times when we've been in seemingly intractable kinds of circumstances, we have compromised and we have talked and we have worked and we have not heaped emotionalism onto the debate. We have not polarized the debate. And if I had to say what I'm going to say -- I do it with regret -- the criticism that I make of the Premier's address today is that rather in these crucial hours of negotiations which are going on in Ottawa right across the country, rather than not contributing to the fire, rather than not pouring gasoline on the fire, just when there's time for hope, when there's time that we might be able to get all of the actors, the dissidents, and the proponents of Meech Lake together in an honourable Canadian compromise, our Premier comes in with an emotional attack impliedly for all of those legitimate Canadians who hold legitimately opposite points of view. And I can only help but remark, that does not help Canada; that hurts Canada, and that hurts this government here.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

(1645)

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Speaker, I would have expected the Premier of this province to have come into this legislature -- it's his motion, keep in mind, keep in mind -- a motion of which, and I don't mean to emphasize this but we had no notice, advance notice, a motion which was brought in on Tuesday, a motion which talks about grave crisis. The Premier based his whole remarks on grave crisis.

I would have thought this is the time in this legislature, with the journalists and those watching on television, to document what it is at the current stage of the negotiations -- the current stage at this hour as we speak -- that has brought Canada to crisis.

I'm not at the table, Mr. Speaker. I haven't been asked by the Premier even to give him my views. I suppose he doesn't have to ask. It doesn't matter. And I don't make any big argument out of that. I don't make any big argument out of it that the reality is that that's been the situation. We're not privy to any discussions.

We're not privy; I don't think the journalists are privy. We can read The Globe and Mail; we can read the Leader-Post and the Star-Phoenix. I guess we're privy to that extent. Some of my colleagues are saying the public isn't privy either. That's true. They are not privy.

I would have expected, Mr. Speaker, I would have expected, Mr. Speaker, that 23 days from the . . . or 24 days approximately from the deadline on the Meech Lake accord, there would have been a recitation in a cool, calm, rational way by the Premier who is privy to the discussions and negotiations of exactly where the failings are shaping up on the contentious issues in order to make the case of crisis.

Because when I pick up The Globe and Mail last night, yesterday -- I was in eastern Canada, Mr. Speaker, as it turns out, on an overnight trip. I came

back and I read in the eastern newspapers, "Premier Bourassa hopeful of compromise" is the headline. I see my Deputy Leader here has handed to me a photocopy of a newspaper report only dated yesterday, Wednesday, May 30, "Compromise reached: Wells." That's the headline in the Regina Leader-Post.

I hear news stories of the so-called three-party agreement in Manitoba is now broken up, the unity of the New Democrats, the Liberals, and the Conservatives is gone asunder. There's something happening in Manitoba. I see Lowell Murray flying by the government airplane to Newfoundland to talk to Mr. Wells as appropriate is the case. Compromise, compromise, 11th hour. I hear all around me, compromise, but I have a motion here today that says there is no compromise around. I have a motion in front of me here that says not only is there no compromise about, but Canada is on the verge of blowing up and exploding; Canada is going to destroy itself. And I would have expected the Premier of this province would have told this House and this public of Saskatchewan who is right. Is it Wells that there is a compromise? Is it Bourassa that says it's a compromise? Or is it the Premier of this province that says we're on the verge of destruction and there is no compromise, and we've got to accept Meech Lake.

What is the truth of the situation? Why wouldn't he have taken this chance? Forget about the opposition whom this government treats with contempt, rightly or wrongly. Forget about us. Why not take this chance, Mr. Speaker, on television to the journalists and say, look I have been at these conversations and here is where the areas of crisis are. You don't have to tell us the details of the negotiation, Mr. Premier. I understand that, the confidentiality. But here are the flash points, and I'm pessimistic. And it looks like we can't move to finding the compromise. Why wasn't there this report? Nothing whatsoever.

Why is there no evidence tendered of what Saskatchewan's positions are in the face of these negotiations, Mr. Speaker? Does Saskatchewan have a point of view on the Senate issue and veto? Has a journalist in this province even asked that question of this Premier and received a straightforward answer? What is the province's position with respect to the Wells compromise that I referred to that says that the distinct society provision and the charter of rights conflict can be . . . apparently it looks like they're making progress resolve.

How does our Premier feel about that as a compromise? Because neither one of those two are Meech, which is what we're being asked to reaffirm again. Today on May 31, 1990 we have something which is at least Meech plus. It may end up being Meech again by Sunday or Monday. I don't know how the negotiations are. But at this sensitive, critical time, first ministers everywhere talking, how does our Premier feel about the Senate? How does our Premier feel about distinct society? How does our Premier feel about the spending power?

Has anybody heard in this speech given today where our provincial government stands on any of these issues and how it fits into a vision of Canada? I dare say that we haven't heard this government even address that issue in the three years since Meech Lake was introduced.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is the real world that we're living in. And the real world tells me, as I turn on my television set and as I listen to my radio stations -- CKRM and CJWW, the best stations in Saskatchewan -- as I listen to those and as I read the newspapers, The Globe and Mail, the Leader-Post, and the Star-Phoenix, everywhere that I go I hear and read, Mr. Speaker, that there is change because Canadians are pushing compromise. That's what I am being told as of this hour, as of this minute, as of this day.

But our Premier is saying, ignore the possibility of compromise; I want you to reaffirm Meech -- something which was agreed to three years ago, something I want you to reconfirm in 1990 and ignore the negotiations of which every other premier's involved in.

What can I conclude? That the Premier is not a part of those negotiations, that he's dealt himself out of representing Saskatchewan's interests and Canada's interests, that he has abandoned the role of compromise and that he has now fastened himself to the demands of the province of Quebec, full stop, period, around Meech Lake -- is that what he's telling me? -- while all the other premiers are searching for compromise and achieving compromise. How does the Minister of Parks and Renewable Resources react to that? Have you asked them in the cabinet table as to what the situation is?

Why, why not in the legislature? He doesn't have to call me in for a half an hour and say, look, Mr. Leader of the Opposition, I want you to keep this confidential, but here are the crisis points. He doesn't have to do that. But he's got to tell somebody somewhere why the crisis is there in the face of the compromise. He wants to have a by-partisan non-political response to this motion, not having at any time in the three years since 1987 even suggested that there should be some dialogue to determine whether or not there are differences between the two sides, honest differences between two loving Canadians loving Canada -- honest differences about that. And we are to be told that this is an Act of by-partisanship because we love this nation.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make a comment about the history of this province's role in Confederation, of which I invite the journalists and others to question as they will. They question everything that we say, and that's fair enough.

I want to make a comment. I want to make a comment, Mr. Speaker, about this . . . just what I've said in the context, the broader context about what Saskatchewan's historical role has been in nation building. And I want to advance the proposition, Mr. Speaker, that for the first time in the history of Canada, the province of Saskatchewan has abandoned an historical position of nation building and compromising, unfortunately and sadly, I say, for what appears to be a position of confrontation.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not here to give a history lesson but I have a little interest in constitutional matters and a very, very little amount of knowledge in it. And if you look at the record of the premiers of recent

history -- Douglas and the dominion-provincial conferences of the 1940s, and the Fulton-Favreau periods and the Victoria charter negotiations of 1971 involving the late Premier Ross Thatcher of the Liberal Party, and you take it right up to modern day, negotiations at least before Meech Lake to the Blakeney era -- Saskatchewan's role was that of a compromiser and a bridge builder. We had a vision, Mr. Speaker, consistently and historically, which did not conform to Ontario's vision or central Canada's vision of Canada.

And there's a very easy answer why that's so, Mr. Speaker. Because Ontario, being the strongest, most populous country and being closely located to Ottawa, is, in their mind, Canada. So they don't need to have strength in provincial powers or new institutions and therefore, they believe in a very, very highly centralized government. It just is working fine for them. We didn't adopt that. Nor did we adopt, at the other end, when the separatists arose in Quebec, a notion of separation. Because clearly, that would destroy Canada; we rejected that at the other end.

And historically and variations, whether it's two nations and the Conservative approach of two nations under a guy called Marcel Faidtibeau or whatever, the NDP position, CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) position in this province was that of being a promoter of a middle ground, based on the principle of co-operative federalism. Some say, well, that's outdated now, it's old-fashioned. Maybe, maybe it isn't. I'd like to not abandon it yet quite totally.

And we fashioned our vision on the following principles: that Saskatchewan and Canada were democratic; that we were a federal state -- that means shared powers between Ottawa and the provinces -- that we believed in a strong central government to do things for all Canadians everywhere, especially those who are less fortunate than others; we believed in a role of provincial jurisdictions, where the powers have been so assigned; we believe in equalization; we believed in the principles of equality; we believed in the principles of flexibility in order to make sure that a modern nation state like Canada would be able to adjust to the realities of a world changing; and we believed in accommodating the special distinct society instincts of the province of Quebec.

We work from those principles. And I'll go back to the history of it. You go back historically, and I speak here with a little bit of knowledge in the most recent part of Meech Lake discussions about compromise, and I'll tell you, Blakeney and the New Democrats and the government of the day were pushing compromise in that mould and in that consensus.

Mr. Speaker, it was important to do so for two reasons. First of all, it's the right way to keep a country as diverse and as regionalized as ours together. You can't have a monolithic rigid constitutional formula apply. And secondly, and this is coming back to Saskatchewan, and very importantly, Mr. Speaker, secondly for a small province like ours, it was the best way to advance and to promote our interests. We were not tied irrevocably to anyone of the powers of the country. We were devising an independent, fair notion of a united, strong Canada -- diversity and unity, if you will. Because it was a way that we could get our strengths in

there, by building allegiances and bridges.

I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, in 1980-82, as wrong as we might have been in that process, that's the only way how we achieved the acquisition of additional natural resources power for the provinces under section 92(a).

Now, Mr. Speaker, since Meech Lake, we have seen an abandonment of that traditional Saskatchewan historical position, an abandonment, today. And we've dealt ourselves out, seemingly, of the national debate which is going on as I speak. Somehow our ministers feel now is the time to get Quebec into Confederation. And note the Premier's arguments, not on the substance of Meech Lake, but on the symbolism of Meech Lake, which brings me to my first point when I started off my discourse this afternoon.

The symbolism has transcended the rational discussion of what kind of a nation we're going to leave behind for future Canadians. It is because of the symbolism -- that's the argument. And as a result of this importance of the symbolism of getting Quebec to join the constitution, which by the way as everybody knows and the Premier acknowledges it, Quebec is in the constitution. In fact they've used the notwithstanding clause. I know there's a legitimate argument that they're not in until they politically, morally, accept it from that point of view; and it's in that context that I think this deficiency must be healed. I very much concur with the Premier on that objective.

But nevertheless they decided, the first ministers of the day, in 1985, three short years after the discussions where Quebec was not a party to the agreement in which I was involved, they decided that we had to get Quebec symbolically

-- maybe they started out thinking symbolically -- and substantively back into Confederation. This was to be the Quebec round. I'll have a word to say about that after adjournment, or at least if they stop the clock at 5 o'clock, I'll have more to say about that, the Quebec round, at 7 p.m.

(1700)

But in doing so -- and this is my last point, Mr. Speaker, before the 5 o'clock break -- in doing so our Prime Minister equated the interests and demands of Quebec and Meech Lake with the interests of Canada overall. Now there is an argument that says that Meech Lake and its interests reflect the better interests of Canada as overall. I didn't hear that argument today by the Minister of Justice or the Premier, but nevertheless there is an argument. I have some doubts about it. But to . . .

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

The Speaker: -- It being 5 o'clock, the House stands recessed until 7 p.m.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.