GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Canadian Unity and Reaffirmation of Meech Lake Accord (continued)

Mr. Romanow: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Before 5 o'clock I was making, as I recollect, two major points: number one, that the current position of the Saskatchewan government with respect to constitutional reform and Meech Lake is a radical variation from what this province has done historically from Douglas, Lloyd, Thatcher, to Blakeney — that historically we were compromisers; we did not attach ourselves to the powerful provinces or the centralists or the decentralists. We advocated compromise because it was in our best interests as a small province, and it was in the best interests of Canada. How else to keep such a diverse country like this together, except through compromise?

And what I was saying before adjournment, Mr. Speaker, was that the current provincial government abandoned compromise early in the Meech Lake debate, and by the introduction of this resolution confirms its abandonment of compromise because, in this motion, it seeks a reaffirmation of Meech Lake, something which we know is under some scrutiny by the provinces of Newfoundland, Manitoba, New Brunswick, and many Canadians. And if we're to bridge the differences between those who support Meech and those who seek changes, it's unfortunate that our Premier and our government has abandoned the historical position of compromise and through this motion has again locked us into Quebec's position and makes it very difficult for us to reach out to find solutions to the other sectors and the other members of our community. I tried to make that first point.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, I tried to make the point before the dinner hour that we have not received an explanation as to why this motion at this time, especially in light of the fact that everywhere in Canada there are negotiations, albeit difficult, albeit problematic, uncertain, but premiers everywhere taking part in that spirit of compromise which is Canada — not confrontation; that is not Canada — to try to work a solution. Why this motion which does not talk of compromise? Why this motion which seeks to recommit, to handcuff us again, if I may put it that way, to the provisions of Meech Lake accord, especially in the light of what is taking place in Canada at this very moment as we speak . . . as I speak, as it were.

There was no explanation by the Premier in this regard, and the point that I wished to make here before dinner, the second point that I make to sum up is that not only is it contradictory, this resolution, to what we are being told and we read is happening in Canada, not only have we been not told by the Premier firsthand what is taking place in Canada; the second point which I also wish to make is that the introduction at this moment of this resolution in the rhetoric and in the language of the Premier — emotionalism, rigidity, confrontation — may in fact be working against the best interests of Canadian unity at this 11th hour negotiations which take place. And I regret that very, very much. And I regret also on the second point, that by our attachment to the Quebec position and to the Ontario position exclusively, we have in effect dealt ourselves out of the picture of advancing a Saskatchewan point of view or another point of view.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that's a summary of the two points that I endeavoured to make before the dinner break. And I now wish to continue on with some other aspects of my argument in response to the Premier's address; and in response to this initiative by the government, this motion, as I repeat again, introduced without any notice to us, without the courtesy of even notifying the Leader of the Opposition that such a motion would be introduced, and that in the national interest sense we ought to try to look at it.

An Hon. Member: — That's not true.

Mr. Romanow: — The members opposite say it's not true. It is absolutely true. There was just no notice given. But again I don't want to get into that. I don't want to get into that. It could have been given notice three days ago, four days before Tuesday. It doesn't matter. It simply reflects a plea for non-partisanship when all around us for three years there has been nothing but partisanship. But that's neither here nor there. It's an aspect of the problem which I know reflects a lot of concern on the part of a lot of members inside the House.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to move to the other main points of my argument this evening, following up on this afternoon. Some can be dealt with and I'll try to take it on a point-by-point basis. Some can be dismissed or at least summed up very quickly. Some will take a little bit of time. I hope you'll bear with me, Mr. Speaker, this is an important debate.

The third point I wish to raise — and I'll try to raise these in question form — is to try to come back to this theme of why this motion now. I've already addressed part of it in the light of the negotiations. And I listened very carefully to find out what it was that would answer in the Premier's address. My question: why this motion now?

Mr. Speaker, the record will show that the Premier's answer to that question in effect was: we need to show Canada that we in Saskatchewan stand by our word. That was the reason for the motion now. No reasons with respect to the complexity or the severity of the negotiations, which we know is the case, by up-to-date information. No, it is because we need to show the rest of Canada that we stand by our word.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the question that I have to ask is: what indication is there that this legislature has not stood by its word, or moreover is not going to stand by its word? The facts are irrefutable. The motion of 1987 remains as an enacted motion — with some dissent, it is true, on my side of the caucus — but it is an enacted resolution now, a government motion, and it has ratified Meech Lake.

In fact, you will recall we were either the first province in all of Canada to do this; we were surely the first English-speaking province in all of Canada to have the Meech Lake motion introduced. It was introduced and

the 20-minute explanation by the Premier, it was enacted; and that is the situation. The legislature has spoken. The legislature has given its word. And unless the Premier is suggesting that he intends to change his word — which of course he is not; I'm not even saying that he is saying that — what is it that requires that we've got to stand by our word? Our word has been the enacted legislative resolution of 1987. It stands on the books until further notice, either as a result of the first ministers' conference this weekend or some other developments.

Mr. Speaker, this is one of the arguments which can be dismissed, in my view, very quickly. This answer of, why now, namely that we should stand by our word, is in my judgement one of the weakest, if not the weakest, arguments of all of those advanced by the Premier and the Minister of Justice today in this debate, especially in the light of the fact that others who have given their word for Meech Lake, the people like Mulroney, Peterson, Bourassa, all of whom signed and all of whom apparently are standing by their word are also at the same time entering actively into negotiations to try to compromise the Canadian way.

Are they not standing by their word by compromising? What is it that this legislature has done or has said as a legislative body that would lead the public of Saskatchewan or Canada to think anything other than that we stand by our word because that is the binding resolution which is here?

So the third point I wish to make, Mr. Speaker: if that is the sum total of the Premier's argument why this motion is introduced, it is a very weak one. And since there is no explanation as to the state of the negotiations and no explanation as to the state of Saskatchewan's position on the various issues, we have no satisfactory explanation in the face of the ongoing discussions this very minute, all over Canada on Meech Lake, as to why this resolution now.

Except, Mr. Speaker, one possible explanation — that it is another attempt to move the debate from cool, calm, reasoned, rational discussion. It's another attempt to move the debate from the spirit of compromise — the Canadian way — to enhance the debate as a symbolism or an aspect of symbolism as the Premier says. Or if you will, to move it from a rational discussion of Canada and indeed add another layer of emotionalism in an already overcharged emotional debate.

And I say if that's the purpose of it then it is a wrong purpose because as I said today before the dinner break, what Canada needs now is less emotionalism and more level-headed compromising — the Canadian way.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, before I close this third point about standing by our word and common sense — perhaps I should use this as the ending of my speech rather than the beginning, and I might at the ending to try to put a theme to this address — I was taken by an editorial in *La Presse* in Quebec City the other day — Quebec — carried the day after Lucien Bouchard's resignation. And *La Presse*'s editorial said the following quote, translated:

> In order that politicians can get through this period they have to transform themselves into statesmen and deploy the qualities of calmness, of patience, of self-control, endurance, and coherence. If they wish to serve Canada (the editorialist says) and/or their own provinces, politicians would do well to lock up their egos for the next few weeks and achieve the maximum degree of calm, patience, and self-control, and plan for the future.

Now I know that this is a debate where egos and emotion perhaps can affect all of us. But I think that is very good advice from *La Presse*. And if the Premier had adopted that stance and tone we would have been far better off I think, this evening and today in the careful consideration of this very delicate and critical situation in Canada.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to move to my forth point, and that is: what is the problem, if any, with respect to Quebec's five demands, so called, upon which Meech Lake was drafted? Can we accept Quebec in Canada? — phrased another way. And do these five demands of Quebec provide a basis for acceptance of Quebec into Canada?

Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to say very clearly — lest there be any doubt about this — everybody on this side of the House, and I dare say very, very few Canadians anywhere would argue against Quebec in Canada as a full-fledged partner, vibrant, exciting, different linguistically, culturally, as it has been and as it will be.

Now I want to tell you that when I asked this question of myself I particularly feel the urgency of trying to come to an accommodation with Quebec because of the events of 1981 and 1982. I won't dwell on those, but one of the regrets that I had was that Quebec — although I look at it rationally and know that it would never have signed the agreement in 1981 because it was a separatist government determined to destroy this country — but nevertheless as the people of Quebec, it's a regret that they are not a formal signatory to the constitution.

And the objective therefore of getting Quebec to be a signatory — for symbolic reasons, not for legal, because we know they're bound by the constitution — is very important. To try to give this country the sense of whole and therefore Quebec's five demands, so-called, I think — to make the second point in this area — are demands which most reasonable Canadians can adopt. Surely we can adopt them on this side of the House. And I've said many times that Quebec's five demands do not pose a problem at all.

(1915)

May I just say parenthetically, Mr. Speaker, that it is incorrect to argue that Quebec at other times advocated 22 demands on Canada but has somehow come down to five and therefore has made a big concession on the demands. It's inaccurate in the sense that at the heart of Quebec's demands has always been the five essential elements which Mr. Gil Rémillard the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs in Quebec explained back in

1985 in an academic conference in Quebec. So we're talking about the same basic five propositions whether it's now or later. And don't let anybody fool you that this is the most reasonable compromise because of the numbers reduction. They had a large list of demands on their shopping list in 1980 to 82, but so did we, so did every province. But everybody knew what the hard-core elements of the agreement were going to be or not going to be, and those were the five traditional demands of Quebec, and described by Rémillard as the traditional demands of Quebec: a veto over future amendments; recognition of a distinct society; limits on a federal power; more power over immigration; a role in the appointment of judges to the Supreme Court, are in summary point, the five Quebec points.

Rémillard set those five points out, Mr. Speaker, in a statement of principles in Quebec in 1985. But Rémillard did not, in setting out those five principles, tell the Canadian public how those principles should be drafted in appropriate constitutional form correctly, so, if I may say so, nor did he say where those five principles should be included in any new, revised constitutional arrangements.

Something happened on the way to the negotiations. From 1985 to 1987 we see, for example, one of the questions of Quebec's five demands, the distinct society, taking an importance and a place in the constitution which up to 1985-1987 had virtually never been the demand of any Quebec government at any time, including a separatist Péquiste government of Mr. René Lévesque, because the switch was from a preamble in the constitution to the main body of the text of the constitution. Those are constitutional, historical facts.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we've got to work to get Quebec to join in a spiritual, moral way, Confederation. And we've got to get these five demands in some form or other, negotiations.

But I say it was the duty of the Prime Minister of this country and the duty of the first ministers of this country to carefully study the exact meaning of those five demands and their application and to negotiate them carefully and to do it over a deliberative process over a period time. Because as urgent as it is to get Quebec on side, it was not so urgent that it had to be done overnight, and for sure it was not so urgent that it had to be done in two all-night sessions without officials and without texts, which is what was the result of Meech Lake accord.

And I go one step further, Mr. Speaker, I say it is the duty of the Prime Minister of this country to make sure that his or her vision of this country is something over and above a vision of any one region of this country no matter how important that region is. If we want to get Quebec into Confederation, we must get Quebec into Confederation and it might, and happily, if it does concur with Quebec's demands after negotiations, all the better. But if it doesn't, there may be another variation of those demands or a western Canadian demand, which is a Canadian response and a legitimate Canadian response to the entry of Canada into Confederation.

We know the history of Meech Lake and how it was negotiated, Mr. Speaker. Two all-night sessions — I'll say a word about the process of Meech Lake in some detail momentarily on my next point, the fifth point — two all-night sessions, and voilà, we have Quebec's five demands and two others that they didn't even ask for included, one of which was the Senate, for example. Voilà, Meech Lake is a *fait accompli* behind closed doors and unveiled to the public of Canada.

I say there is legitimate room, symbolism notwithstanding — I'm going to speak to symbolism — for concerned Canadians who love this country as much as any other group of Canadians, to question the words and the meaning and the impact of those five conditions, not only with respect to Quebec but the future of Canada and the direction that this country is going to take. And I'm going to say a word about that in the light of some recent speeches and statements by various Quebec politicians. And I'll be asking the Premier whether he subscribes to these statements in just a moment.

So my fourth point as I close up: we do not quarrel with the principles of getting Quebec into confederation. On a personal basis I feel more anxious and concerned about that perhaps than, perhaps than any other member in this House, for other reasons. And the demands I think are reasonable and can be negotiated — they're traditional.

But in the light of the process and what I think are some concerns about what was negotiated, it surely must be open to the Canadian public to discuss variations and examine the wording, as is being done this very moment as we speak throughout Canada. And the Premier of the province of Saskatchewan should be lending his voice and his intelligence and his expertise on behalf of the interests of the people of Saskatchewan to that compromise, to those five demands of Quebec.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — Now, Mr. Speaker, I move now to my fifth point. This gets to be a bit more detailed, but it's an examination of how it was that we arrived at the fleshed-out, completed versions of the Meech Lake accord. The five principles had to be translated into a form of action.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to commend to you an article which I do not say is authentic, because I was not there — but I've not heard any first minister dispute its authenticity by the way — which appears in the *Saturday Night* edition of June 1990, there's an excerpt of a larger book by Mr. Andrew Cohen, an acknowledged, respected journalist with *The Financial Post*, who describes the process of the discussions about the future of Canada and the five demands of Quebec at Meech Lake and Langevin. No premier that I know of — I stand to be correct by my hon. colleague, the Premier here, if I'm correct or incorrect at some time — but so far as I know, no one's disputed it.

The headline is rather graphic. Excuse me for the language but I'm reading the headline. I apologize to those who may be watching on television but it's part of a theme. The headline says, "That bastard Trudeau."

> Behind closed doors, first at Meech Lake and then at the Langevin Block, the eleven first ministers sealed a deal that not even they, at the outset, thought possible. In the process, they exposed some private demons.

That's a subtitle.

Now we all have private demons and we all accomplish things that we didn't plan to accomplish. But this is required reading for people who are interested about what Meech Lake might mean and how it was put together. I'm talking about process, but process leading to substance.

The first thing that this article points out is that when the ministers, the first ministers including our Premier here sitting in the House tonight listening to my remarks, for which I thank him, when they were called on April 30, 1987 to discuss the constitution, this article said, "few had any real expectations of success." In fact in another article it is reported that none believed that there was anything except a general discussion about Meech Lake — no text, nothing had been submitted in advance to prompt this kind of a review.

And the writer contrasts what took place. He said, the premiers were assembled all alone. They were Mulroney, David Peterson of Ontario, John Buchanan of Nova Scotia, Howard Pawley of Manitoba, Joe Ghiz of Prince Edward Island, Don Getty of Alberta. On his left were Robert Bourassa of Quebec, Richard Hatfield of New Brunswick, William Vander Zalm of British Columbia, Grant Devine of Saskatchewan, and Brian Peckford of Newfoundland.

And the story continues, and I want to underline this quote, "In contrast to other meetings, the first ministers were virtually alone."

So my second point is, if this is accurate. There they were, able people, all of them. I don't agree with the Premier's policies, but who would deny that he's not an able person? But he can't be knowledgeable in every area. And there he is — one of 11 first ministers, alone, unlike other meetings.

Now the third point. Article says this: "Both Spector . . ." This refers to Norman Spectre, a person for whom I have a great deal of respect. I happen to know Norman Spector quite well. He was involved in 1979-82 experience with British Columbia ". . . and Lennie . . ."

Happens to so be it that I happen to know Oryssia Lennie very well too. She was very much a strong and senior advisor of the Alberta government.

> Both Spector and Lennie took notes, though no formal minutes were kept. The role of the two public servants was to summarize the consensus on the agenda (Mr. Speaker) and under discussion have it drafted more formally and typed by federal officials upstairs. The new wording was then sent back to the premiers for more discussion. This process repeated itself all day long. (Get these words) The legal text of the final proposal was not drafted and approved until a second meeting at the Langevin Block in Ottawa in early June.

Now what's important about that is drafting on the go. But what's also important about that is that the completed text was not put on the table before first ministers, and yet they came out of Meech Lake pronouncing an agreement — not having seen the legal text.

An Hon. Member: — Do you want to recap that again?

Mr. Romanow: — My colleague says recap that again. It simply says this:

> The new wording was then sent back to the premiers for more discussion. This process repeated itself all day long. The legal text of the final proposals was not drafted and approved until the second meeting at the Langevin Block in Ottawa in early June.

But we know what the ministers said when they came out of Meech Lake. They said they had a deal.

What else does this article say about the process? This I find interesting, Mr. Speaker:

> Each of the Premiers had a summary — which did not necessarily correspond with the others' — of the negotiations over the previous months.

I'll stop there. Can you imagine this? Each of the 10 premiers have summaries of the negotiations, but what each one has is not necessarily the same of all 10, all 11. Each also had a list of Quebec's demands and suggested wording and his own response. But Mulroney and Spector were calling the plays. They handed the federal proposals — what had emerged from the long season of intergovernmental negotiations — to the premiers one at a time. They were concerned — get these words — "that presenting the entire proposed text would be too intimidating."

People say, well that's a good way to negotiate from the Prime Minister's point of view. Maybe. My question and the reason I'm going into these articles is this is the way we build a nation in a constitutional nation.

Article goes on about the Senate. This is the part about five demands of Quebec:

> Eventually, with Alberta holding out for a concession, Mulroney suggested that they do for the Senate what they had done for the Supreme Court: ask the provinces to submit lists of candidates from which the federal government would chose.

I stress these words, Mr. Speaker, direct quote: "This was not one of Quebec's demands. 'It came out of nowhere,' says one premier; 'No-one asked for it.'"

Then the question about the ambiguity of the provisions of distinct society — I'm going to say . . . as I say a word about this and relate it to some comments of which I'll ask the Premier a question. The writer says about the

ambiguity: "The ambiguity that would cause problems later was welcome now." And the reason for that's obvious: with ambiguity a better chance of an agreement that night. The specifics of course were to be left to be undecided.

And finally this with respect to the distinct society, Mr. Speaker. And I will move on from this analysis that we have, the only analysis we have of what took place in Meech Lake on Langevin with respect to distinct society. This is a lengthy quotation but I'm going to read it, Mr. Speaker, because it's important:

(1930)

> When the first ministers finally got down to business, spending power and the distinct-society clause dominated the talks. Ontario and Manitoba wanted to make them issues. Peterson argued for a more precise definition of "distinct society." He worried that Quebec could invoke its collective rights through the clause to override the individual rights of women, native people, or ethnic Canadians. Pawley was concerned about spending powers. He argued that, if provinces could opt out of federal programmes and establish their own with compensation, there would be no more national programmes.
>
> The other premiers had no real qualms on either issues. The prime minister, for his part, seems to have been more mediator than advocate. Most of the premiers thought the distinct-society clause posed no threat to the Charter. Even if it did, there is doubt that some of them — Getty, Vander Zalm, and Devine — really cared. Peterson, on the other hand, was under pressure from those, including women, who believed the Charter as instrument of social reform was imperilled. Moreover, he was planning to call an election within six months and was worried about alienating his constituency. To clarify or not to clarify. "If you clarified it, you created problems for other people at the table," recalls one of Peterson's senior advisors. "I think it had to be ambiguous.
>
> There were at least two different views of what it meant. The faith was that the court would end up making 'distinct society,' relative to the Charter, more than I thought it meant and less than Quebec thought it meant. In other words, the court would balance it". This, of course, (the article says) touched the core of the debate over the notion of distinct society. No one knew what it meant.
>
> No one knew what it meant. There were no advisors at Langevin either. There they are, 11 ministers, talking about the five conditions of Quebec with these provisions that are there.

There is an interesting story about how the distinct society was overcome actually, with constitutional experts like Peter Hogg being brought in and explaining the situation to them. But nevertheless that was the situation that is described.

And I have to give you one last quotation, Mr. Speaker, on page 45 of the article:

> Mulroney had virtually abdicated as guardian of federal interest. He had become a conciliator.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I do not know if that is the history of the making of Meech Lake and Langevin. The Premier no doubt will be writing his memoirs some day and will be able to tell us whether that history of Mr. Cohen's is accurate or not accurate.

But nevertheless, there it is. And nevertheless there is the process that takes place with these specific five conditions. And is it a wonder that when it is unveiled after these negotiations and discussions, that thoughtful Canadians wish to ask questions about it? Not to destroy Canada, but to try to figure out how we can make Canada in the sense of compromise even stronger.

Mr. Speaker, I said I want to make a comment about distinct society, and I do. I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that historically, in my time, politicians struggled with the notion of figuring out how to put distinct society in the constitution.

An Hon. Member: — When was your time?

Mr. Romanow: — The member from Melville objects to the use of the term "in my time." Not to offend him — when I was around as attorney general from '79 to '82 and I was present at these negotiations, we struggled with the idea of recognizing Quebec as a distinct society. The government has the records of the day in their files. We couldn't find the words, but I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that whatever the words might have been, at no time even under a separatist government led by René Lévesque, was it suggested by the province of Quebec that the concept of distinct society would be anywhere except in the preamble — partly because of the difficulties of figuring out what it would mean and its possible implications to the future of Canada is why that was the case.

From 1982 to 1987 there was a radical departure or a quantum leap forward from this change to now that we have found the words "distinct society," according to the article on Meech Lake and Langevin — still the ministers not knowing what it means, even in general terms — but we move now from preamble to the main body of the text of the constitution, as a duty to preserve and to promote.

This may be a good thing, and it may be a bad thing, But it is a concept, because of its importance, which surely begs for debate and discussion and clarification lest, in order to make Canada whole, we end up setting up a constitutional regime which makes Canada less down the road — and especially in the light of the fact that, as this documentation of Mr. Cohen's shows, the first ministers apparently did not know themselves what it meant.

And then of course, there is the new dimension. How does the provision of distinct society in the main body of the text attach itself to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms? Is it inferior to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, in which case the individual rights of all

Canadians will trump Quebec's collective right of distinct society? Measured on geography in Quebec, that's what Meech Lake does. Or is it superior to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms? Does it trump individual rights?

And thus you can see why, right now as I speak, first ministers are there trying to figure out how to square that circle. They're trying to achieve both objectives. They're trying to achieve one of Quebec's objectives of being recognized as a distinct society together with another valid Canadian objective, and that is to make sure the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is a part and parcel of an act of liberal freedom which applies to all Canadians. Is it so wrong for Canadians to raise that voice? Why should the Premier be foreclosing that option to Canadians and to us by the introduction of a motion which says it is Meech Lake, period, with all of the ambiguities and with all of the potential interpretations — nothing less, nothing more, no change, no dot added, no comma, no stroke of the pen to anything. What is so sacred to that position? Symbolism — I'm going to come to that. That's his argument. It's symbolism, and I'll come to that in a moment.

Thankfully there are other Canadians who are saying, it's risky but we're going to try to square that circle; we're going to try to compromise, and thus the negotiations are going on. I don't know what the outcome will be but I do know one thing, that a confrontationist approach that says take it or leave it on this kind of an issue, simply is not going to have, in my judgement, the prospect of very much success. And if it has success in the short term, it won't have success, I predict, in the long term — maybe not in the term of my political life, but in the long term of the nation's future and unity.

Now some will say, well I hear the former attorney general saying about process and what did you people do there in that period from 1979 to 1982? I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, right off, that the process and the substance is not perfect. I concur with the Minister of Justice when he spoke this afternoon. I don't think that men and women, no matter how intelligent or well motivated, will find perfect documentation for a complex nation such as ours. And ours was imperfect.

But that process of Mr. Cohen's description is essentially a total variance of what took place in 1979 to 1982. For three months, actually for three years, there were intensive ministerial and officials' discussions on the constitutional provisions for over three years, Mr. Speaker, in that period.

Secondly, there were court cases about the legitimacy of the actions of the federal government which defined relationships of the provincial governments.

Thirdly, there was a parliamentary committee. Do you remember the parliamentary committee? I think over a thousand submissions — I could be wrong on that — but numerous submissions were made by Indian people and Metis people and Inuit people and women.

You know they attacked us, the women of Canada attacked us who were involved in that constitutional process. And I say retrospectively — I didn't see it at the time because I got kind of into the trap the Premier is in, you know, it's this and nothing. But they attacked us correctly by saying you've cut out women's rights. And even at that late stage chronologically we listened as Canadians, we compromised as Canadians, and we incorporated the finest provision of sexual equality anywhere in North America, if not in the world.

And we had four televised conferences and we had texts and texts and texts and texts. And I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, not that you'd be interested in this particularly, if you came to my basement room in my home in Saskatoon you would have boxes of texts of all the various drafts on the Senate and on the spending power and on the distinct society and on the amending formula and on regionalization that you would ever care to have. And the government has them because they're all government involvement. I was a member of the government and records have been left behind in that regard.

We worked. It was not perfect. And we failed because we did not get Quebec in. And we did not have it as open as we should have to the public. I admit fault.

But I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that by the yardstick of that period as measured against what took place under Meech Lake, this was light-years ahead of consultation and openness and discussion, and we should not have retreated from it to more closed discussions.

We should have built on it, we should have had it more open, we should have had it more deliberative, we should have encompassed the groups of Canada, and we would have been better and richer for it today and we would have not been debating this matter at the 11th hour today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — Now, Mr. Speaker, I come to my sixth point which, Mr. Speaker, I think is the most important point and the strongest argument that the Premier has in this debate at this current time — symbolism. And my question is: what is symbolism, it's meaning and importance?

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice this afternoon and the Premier this afternoon in their addresses you will notice have long ago abandoned trying to defend the provisions of Meech Lake on its merits. They have reduced their argument . . . I don't mean to minimize it when I say reduced. They have limited their argument to saying that — they didn't use these words but the effect of it is, look there may be problems; we don't maybe know what a distinct society means. But please, they are saying to us and to the Canadians, it is now gone beyond the debate of reason, it is now become Meech Lake, a symbol, which if it is rejected will be a signal as a symbol to Quebec that we are rejecting Quebec, and they say as a consequence of that there will be enormous difficulties for the future of Canada. Symbolism.

I've already made my point that I think that symbolic emotional debate over which the journalists of this country, some of them have been swept up, I say regrettably; I think it's a fact. But I said in my comments

this afternoon I think it was part of a deliberate strategy from the Ontario paper and other papers to try to push reasoned debate from reason to symbolism. But none the less it is here today. It is symbolically so important, as the Minister of Justice and the Premier has said. This is a serious argument advanced by the ministers.

And I might say, never mind that the symbolism has been pushed. If I may be permitted one comment which I don't like myself saying but I'm going to. The symbolism issue, the emotion of it, has been pushed by a resignation of M. Lucien Bouchard — a separatist — who was invited to the Progressive Conservative cabinet in Ottawa and was asked to be the Quebec lieutenant on Quebec matters by the Prime Minister of Canada; who, Mr. Bouchard, when he did not like the developments of Charest and did not like the move to Canada — which is compromise which is what Charest was doing — chose it upon himself to re-establish and reconfirm once again his separatist position. Symbolism. Everybody is scared as a consequence of that.

How did it rise to become so symbolically important? Well I say first of all the tactics of the Prime Minister. Ever since Meech Lake has been enacted, the Prime Minister and the Premier — not the Premier so much of this province but the Premier in the last couple of weeks — have been saying: the country's going to fall apart, the sky is going to fall down if we don't pass Meech Lake without any changes whatsoever. So it's become now symbolically important.

Secondly, I do not cast any blame here other than on some irresponsible media and journalists in Quebec. Nightly portrayal of inflammatory acts by a few irresponsible Canadians outside of Quebec fed that symbolism around Meech Lake. I don't condemn the media, I suppose, for doing it, except for the severity and the numerous times it's done, but nevertheless that's fed the symbolism.

(1945)

Thirdly, it's been fed by the fact that this is important in the face of what's happening in the province of Quebec, and I want to spend a moment or two on this. We are told that it is symbolically important because something has happened within the province of Quebec — the PQ (Parti Québécois) separatists. They won't permit it otherwise is the argument. It's got to be Meech Lake and Bourassa's hands are tied. Why? Because Mr. Parizeau and the Péquistes and the nationalist sympathizers will not permit it otherwise.

One could speculate this question, Mr. Speaker. Supposing Premier Bourassa wanted it otherwise, believed so strongly about a different configuration of Quebec within Canada which would clarify these five points of his, and perhaps is a compromise and the Canadians wanted it, are we being told that he neither has the courage nor the will or the determination to stand up to those separatists or, as the Premier would call them this afternoon, the radicals to fight for an alternative vision of Quebec within confederation which might be in a different set-up?

I guess that's like the Premier of this province of Saskatchewan going to Ottawa and saying, you know, Prime Minister, I cannot go along with privatization. You know why I can't go along with privatization? Because the NDP in Saskatchewan have got a strong position against privatization and it looks like the public of Saskatchewan don't want privatization, so I'm not going to do privatization. We know that that's not what's happened. The Premier, being a man of strong will and intelligence, believing in certain goals, has pushed privatization and he'll either stand or fall on the election on that point.

And so too it is in Quebec that if Mr. Bourassa, a federalist, sees a radical position by separatists, does it logically follow that the federalists must adopt the separatists' view of what Quebec's role is in Confederation and more importantly, does it follow logically that we, the rest of Canadians, must adopt the argument that says, well Bourassa can't move? To which I say, why can't he move? He can't move, I'm told, because there's a separatist out there threatening him. Well of course there's a separatist out there threatening in Quebec. There's a New Democratic Party threatening the Premier in this province; there's a leader of the opposition in every province threatening the government of the day. Does that mean that the government is paralysed and doesn't act, especially on an important issue like Canadian unity? Of course not. If you believe in a certain concept, then you stand up and you say to Mr. Parizeau: I'm sorry, you may be ahead on the polls; maybe all the nationalists are going this view, but I am compromising because we can achieve what we want for Quebec, the speciality of Quebec, and we can do it within a united Canada and we can compromise. I'm standing up to do it.

Where have the voices of Canadian federalism or alternate visions for Quebec within Canada been? And of course, the journalists are now part of the cacophony. You see, the symbolism's so important. Why is the symbolism so important? Well because they're on their way to separation out there, you know. Why doesn't somebody stand up for federalism? Oh well, they'll get defeated. Heaven forbid that we should get defeated on a point of principle.

Where have the voices of federalism been? Where have they been in the last six years? Has Mr. Lucien Bouchard been explaining Canada to Quebec? Has Mr. Benoît Bouchard been explaining Canada to Quebec? Has François Gérin been explaining Canada to Quebec? I know they explain Quebec to Canada, and that they should do. A Saskatchewan MP should go to Ottawa and explain Saskatchewan to Ottawa. Goodness knows, they need to know all they can about Saskatchewan. But they come back from time to time and they explain Canada to Saskatchewan.

Why was a separatist taken into the cabinet and advising the Prime Minister of this country on Quebec affairs? For six years no one speaks for Canada. And now we're told Mr. Bourassa has no running room. And now we're told because of those actions it's Meech Lake; take it or leave it, no t crossed, i dotted, or comma changed. And illogically we're told, that is Canada because of the symbolism. Not compromise, take it or leave it.

So much symbolism, Mr. Speaker, on that point that the Premier today in his address said that it irritated him to see the radicals that he described — I assume he refers to the separatists, maybe others — when they get any cause like a flag or whatever to escalate the nationalism and to step away from breaking. Well it hurts me too. It hurts all of us. But he says he hates to see this happen, and we must not allow — I have his notes marked down here, his words marked down here; it may be slightly off because I was writing as quick as I could — he said we must not allow the radicals to find yet another cause to push separatism in Quebec which they will find if we turn down Meech Lake. Now you think of the logic of that, Mr. Speaker. Fair enough, fair enough.

Is the logical extension of that argument, therefore, that we should write a constitution to satisfy the separatists? Is that the logical conclusion? The radicals. And especially to write it if the rest of Canada gains peace in our time in five years from now or less. Because there will be another premier someday, somewhere, in some province, either in Quebec or outside of Quebec who will be saying five years from now there's a new set of nationalists out there and there's a new set of radicalism, and we've got to give them more. Why? Because he has no room to move. It is the duty of premiers inside and outside Quebec, to develop a policy of Quebec speciality and uniqueness and distinctness within the five principles of Quebec, and to do so and to defend it both in English and in French, in Quebec and outside of Quebec, to keep this country together. And we ought not to be hit with the argument of symbolism now brought about by these circumstances.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — But I have another point to make about symbolism, Mr. Speaker, before I leave this point. And this also I think bears careful analysis in the light of the Premier's address. The Premier says symbolism on Meech Lake is extremely important. And he's right. I've acknowledged that. I've tried to explain, unfortunately, why I think it is and how I think we can still try to do it if we had people speaking for Canada. But if that's a principle of Canadianism or Quebecism — if I may put it that way — which is important . . . let's say Canadianism, forget about the . . . If that's important — symbolism — then it's important everywhere for nation building, Mr. Speaker.

If the argument is don't turn down Meech Lake because the symbolism of it in Quebec is going to be bad and the consequences are going to be bad, then let's flip the coin and ask ourselves what about the symbolism on the other side if Meech Lake goes through, period, without any accommodation for other Canadians like Newfoundland, like Manitoba, like New Brunswick, like the Indians, like the Metis, like the Innuit, like the women, like the North, who symbolically see Meech Lake in another context.

Is it such a state of affairs in Canada that symbolism for this great country applies basically to one group of people to the exclusion of all others? And we say we're going to build a united country out of all that. If symbolism is so important, Mr. Speaker — and it is — if we're going to get attachment to this Meech Lake accord, we need to look at the symbolisms, and they're there if we apply our compromise which will make it work for everybody. Wells is reasonable. I've never met the man, but I'm sure he is. Filmon, I have never met the man; I'm sure he is reasonable. These people don't want to see this country break up either. They want the Canadian way, compromise to work. And then Canadians outside of Quebec see the symbolism of VIA Rail closing down or the symbolism of post offices being closed down.

Or the symbolism . . . I have a letter here from the Association culturelle franco-canadienne de la Saskatchewan dated today, May 31, 1990. And they're writing to me about Meech Lake and about this debate and the emergency of the debate. And they say eight months after ratifications of the Meech Lake accord, Saskatchewan abolished the historic French language rights. And then they backtrack; they say on the Fransaskois component of the system of education, and they say they do this in violation of all of the constitutional and other commitments that have been made. And we are saying to them, as a matter of symbolism, what symbolism do you have out of this as a part of Canada's Confederation and a part of the family outside of Quebec or outside anywhere else?

There are many important symbols for nation building, very many important symbols. Quebec's symbolism is the very most important right now. But there are other symbols and, Mr. Speaker, because there are other symbols and symbolism is a key, I say that we have got to find a way to make compromises that are honourable — not everybody in every area, but the key compromises which are honourable here to make those symbolisms which are important to various Canadians and various regions of this country, a symbolism which unites this country.

And surely the Premier subscribes to that point of view; I know he does. And if that's the case he ought not to be trying to ram this resolution through. He should be going down to Ottawa or on the phone, and he should be working compromises to find those symbolisms that are good for Quebec and good for Saskatchewan and good for Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to move to my next point, away from symbolism. Is it possible to compromise? I want to preface my heading here by the question to you, sir, or to the Premier through you: why did we not have a speech about whether or not there is any possibility for compromise by the Premier today?

This is a variation of what I said before dinner. I would have thought you would come to the legislature and you would say, now look, here are the areas of compromise and here are the difficulties, etc., — and you don't have to give the details of it. And this person, I say this in a very admiring way of him, if there's anything about him, he's an optimist. I mean, being so far down in the polls in the province of Saskatchewan you've got to be an optimist and still smile. He's an optimist.

Is there no hope, no optimism for possible compromise?

Back in 1987 we made a motion for amendment. I will not belabour the House on the details of the various amendments — Senate, no unanimity, aboriginals, new provinces. And by the way, we were turned down on all of these by the government. And since that time other concerns have arisen, spending power, the distinct society charter was not a subject in the amendment in 1987 but was the subject of comments by my predecessor, my leader, Al Blakeney, at the time. All of these were in the spirit of what the theme of my address is — compromise the Canadian way.

And if you take a look at where the possible areas of compromise are, I think they're not . . . certainly the problems are serious and I think the solutions are there. Not in a necessary order here; I simply identify one — the question of protection of national cost-shared programs. Meech Lake should not permit it to be more difficult to have new national programs introduced with the danger of inequality because of opt-out provisions.

And I want to tell you again — I don't say this is the perfect way of doing it. I'm reluctant to speak on this in some ways because . . . lest somebody misinterprets my remarks as in effect saying, well you know he's really saying that nothing is as good in 1990 when he's not around as it was when he was around. But I do want to say, having stated that disclaimer, that there are spending power drafts which would satisfy Quebec. Namely in areas of provincial jurisdiction where the federal government is spending money, you can develop a mechanism, at least as a backstop to get provincial approval, before the spending power is actually implemented. And there are very many drafts at work on that area which would satisfy the two objectives of having national programs and some form of provincial protection.

Second point. What about this business of national institutions and the Senate? Now, Mr. Speaker, I have never been traditionally one who has been a strong advocate of Senate reform. A lot of western Canadians have been talking about the Triple E Senate. Well I've always, in my political life, talked about the triple A Senate — abolish, abolish, abolish. But I acknowledge that if we could get a Triple E Senate and have an institution at the centre of political power representing regional interests, it might have some merit to it.

(2000)

I can tell the Premier, if you'll take this advice from me, with the greatest of respect, if there is unanimity or veto for the big regions of this province on Senate reform.

An Hon. Member: — You'll never get it.

Mr. Romanow: — Well, you might get it. My colleagues are saying forget it. I don't expect to see it in my political lifetime, and I'll tell you why. If you give the veto to Quebec or Ontario, this is how the trade-offs will go, Mr. Speaker. If you give them a veto with respect to equal, effective, and elected, the trade-offs will work like this.

If they are going to be equal, say 10 senators per province, then they will be less effective because Ontario isn't going to give them meaningful powers. If you give them meaningful powers effected, you ain't going to give them equality, because Ontario and Quebec are not going to allow matters of language and culture to be working against them.

And I want to tell you, if Quebec gets distinct society as it is in Meech Lake approved with the consent of our Premier here, there's no way that it's going to agree to a Triple E Senate because the Triple E Senate stands the danger of undoing all of the additional jurisdictional power that they would acquire through the distinct society provisions.

Now maybe wiser people than I, of which there are many in this House and in this country, can come up with a mechanism for Senate reform, but I tell you, Mr. Speaker, I tell western Canadians who want into Confederation, kiss Senate good-bye on the current situation with respect to Meech Lake. Kiss it good-bye, because as I say, if the Premier doesn't believe me, I'll be pleased to show him boxes in my basement of various detailed drafts, House of the provinces, councils of the provinces, the German models, the variations of various drafts, and it's not going to work. So we need to have some flexibility in the Senate system.

Thirdly, what about rights of aboriginal people? I said about symbolism and having, not an exclusive constitutional process, not either/or, but a both/and process. Mr. Speaker, I have said I won't dwell on this, but I want to make this point very briefly again. I have said that one of the blots on this country — there are many blots on this country with respect to aboriginal peoples and the way we've dealt with them — but one of the blots on this country is the history of recent constitutional negotiations on aboriginal rights.

For five years, the aboriginal people of Canada worked hard to develop detailed drafts about their rights. Those drafts were in the public domain. I've got those too in my basement. Everybody's got them. For five years, the ministers and the officials of the gentlemen opposite looked at those drafts, for five years opposite. And you know what happened at the end of five years of negotiations? The aboriginal people of Canada were told, I'm sorry, we can't adopt those drafts because the meaning of them is unclear. And within two years or less, they turned around and they adopted the provisions of Meech Lake which, according to Mr. Cohen, the meaning of which is still unclear.

The tale of two constitutional conferences, the tale of two power centres and two approaches in a country which cherishes itself on the principles of fairness. Can we not be more specific in some form or other of working out this legitimate complaint and concern?

Fourth, is it fair about new provinces, Mr. Speaker — Yukon, Northwest Territories? They can only come in now under Meech Lake if there's unanimity. Everybody else didn't have unanimity. Why should they?

And finally, I've made my comments with respect to a distinct society. These are not comments of condemnation as much as they are of pleas for

clarification. That's what they are. What do these words mean? Because there's big debate on this — it's either a question of the charter trumping distinct society or vice versa.

You know, Mr. Speaker, on distinct society, there's one little paragraph out of the *Winnipeg Free Press* of April 28, 1980 — which I'll put into the record — I find also very interesting. Frances Russell is the reporter. She's a respected national journalist. And Ms. Russell writes that the Manitoba's attorney general — Roland Penner at the time — recalls the following:

> The situation became ludicrous. Premier Vander Zalm was trying to get his attorney general on a pay phone to read little bits and pieces from the back of an envelope. A Constitution should not be written that way. When it's written that way, you're going to get into considerable difficulty.

Ms. Russell writes. I think that that is absolutely the case true.

I'm still on the question of distinct society. Wells is at least talking about compromising here, and working out a compromise. I again make my plea to the Premier. Can you not join in a consideration of these suggestions too, so that we can get some clarity and sense to this. Compromise the Canadian way.

And now I said I had a question for the Premier with respect to the distinct society — and Meech Lake more particularly — which I think is an example of the kind of question which is fundamental and has not been answered, so far as I know, certainly not by the Premier in our province or by other leaders of our country's governments. Meech Lake is a struggle between a strong central government and a decentralized government. And, Mr. Speaker, you will know that many Quebec writers have said that sovereignty association may be the ultimate intended goal, and that Meech Lake only is a stepping stone.

Mr. Speaker, this is extremely important to my argument about compromise and where it goes from here. On May 15, Quebec's minister of intergovernmental affairs told a European audience as follows. And I read a translation from English to French. This is Gil Rémillard, the same person who set out the five conditions that I've talked about. This is just a few days ago in Paris.

> The Meech Lake accord is only the first step toward achieving a new Canadian decentralized state. That nothing excludes the fact that a state can include two or more nations. That federalism is a philosophy rather than a system; a movement rather than a definition; an association rather than a union.

Nothing excludes the fact that a nation can include two or more nations. That's what Mr. Rémillard said, and that Meech Lake is only the first step toward achieving that kind of decentralized operation.

Mr. Speaker, will you contemplate for a moment what those words mean. Two nations within one state. That is what the Quebec ministers are interpreting Meech Lake to mean. Well I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that definition may be Mr. Rémillard's definition of what Canada's about, but it is not my definition of what Canada and federalism is about — two nations in one state.

My definition is one nation, united, diverse, a federation where there is unity in diversity, where there is compromise, where there is no Balkanization, where there is equality, where there is liberty, where there is opportunity, where there is fairness, where there is democracy — one nation, not two nations.

I think compromise is possible on those four or five points I've raised, and I might even argue that compromise is necessary in order to clarify whether or not Mr. Rémillard's words about two nations in a state mean what I think they mean, because I think most Canadian's will want to know about that.

And now, Mr. Speaker, I have two final items which will go very quickly as I close my remarks. I have now closed on the question of whether or not compromise is possible. Mr. Speaker, compromise is not only possible but it is absolutely essential.

I want to close on two points. Second to last is the role of the public. Mr. Speaker, even at this late date we can no longer exclude the public from these negotiations. Mr. Speaker, if the Premier does not agree with any of my interpretations or possible interpretations of the meaning of Meech Lake, I hope he accepts my argument that part of his political problems with respect to Meech Lake and Canadians' problems in Meech Lake is because the process was done in secret, was not consultative, and was not deliberative.

And I say this with all the sincerity that I can muster in me to the Premier, that the current process of negotiations, while I welcome it because it shows compromise, needs another dimension to it lest you compound the problem. And even if you do fix it up, you fix it up by complicating the flaw in the process which was there originally, namely more secret negotiations piled on top of more secret negotiations.

At first, the Prime Minister of Canada said, no consultations. And then came Charest. He was forced to go into public consultation. And I think Charest wrote a marvellous report for Canada which, by the way, was not consistent with the Premier's resolution which we are debating today — not consistent at all with it.

Charest listened to the people. Charest, the Liberals, the Conservatives, and the NDP listened to the people and they came up with a consensus compromise, a unanimous report — from a parliament that only two years before virtually almost unanimously went for Meech Lake without any changes. Can you imagine the spirit of compromise which existed in Canada. They listened to people. And today's motion denies the listening to people.

And, Mr. Speaker, I remind you and those who may be watching this debate tonight that we tried in 1987 to have the public involved in the constitution, building on the

flaws of our process in ’81-82. We had resolutions in this House and they were rejected. In fact the minister of Justice of the time said:

> It is our view that no real purpose would be served by delaying our approval of this resolution by requiring formal public debate.

Delaying — three years ago. We could have had 10 public hearings in three years and still have enacted Meech Lake without changes if that was the intention of the government. But there was a desire not to delay, although as one of my colleagues says, what was the rush three years ago? And it didn’t work.

Mr. Speaker, I can only speculate as to what might have happened if they had listened to our amendment and we’d had those public hearings and the public had had its chance to be heard, for good or for bad. Maybe we might have been moving to those amendments which we on this side introduced back in 1987, earlier, because we know that as I speak this very moment, all of Canada is moving, or at least trying to move in that same direction towards those amendments that we introduced and moving toward the compromises of which I speak.

And that’s why I say, for the life of me — with distress I say this — I do not understand why this motion at this time. Instead we are told, no changes; if you don’t accept it, it’s the end of Canada. It’s symbolically important; I’m not even going to speak to the substance any more. And impliedly we are told, woe be it on those who do not buy those arguments of symbolism — woe be it to you. And we are told that that is done in a democratic fashion.

Mr. Speaker, it’s a sad day. It’s a sad state of affairs that we’ve arrived at here because of that rhetoric, that emotionalism, and that kind of a posture which has been adopted. And as one of my colleague says — I’ll rephrase this question — is this the way we build a nation for the 1990s and the year 2000 to deal with our economic problems and our great potential? And I might say to the members opposite: has there not been any one of you in caucus or in cabinet who might have just thought to ask some of these questions of somebody in power over there as to whether or not there is any truth to this?

(2015)

This position I’m advocating on Meech Lake, I can tell you, doesn’t come necessarily with a lot of unanimity on our side all the time, because our people ask these questions. And they’re saying, I’m not so sure, Mr. Leader of the Opposition, that what you’re saying is correct. So we have some dissent on our side. Is there nobody on that side who reflects or exhibits this concern of Canada? That clearly doesn’t seem to be the case because we have locked ourselves to Quebec’s demands, and we have said that Quebec’s demands equal Canada’s demands.

Well now, Mr. Speaker, I think it’s time for me to close. It’s time for me to close, Mr. Speaker, and before I close I’m going to introduce an amendment to the motion.

Yes, the members opposite say it figures. It sure does figure. It figures because of what I’ve been saying. It may not figure for them, but it figures. I say, Mr. Speaker, that this is not a time for emotionalism. We all love Canada. This is a time for Saskatchewan to take leadership and to return to its traditional role of compromise. That’s what Canadians want. They want a settlement to this crisis, and they want compromise.

Mr. Speaker, I say something else in closing. We must not endanger what other premiers are doing elsewhere in trying to save Canada through the negotiations; and that if we adopt the Meech Lake only posture, it’s telling the rest of Canada that nothing else is possible. Will we be destroying the efforts of Bourassa and Wells and Filmon and Mulroney as they struggle to come to a Canadian compromise? Is that the signal we want to send the rest of Canada? Do we want to say to the rest of Canada, no, we don’t care what you’re doing by way of compromise; it’s going to be Meech Lake 1987 — not one change, not one amendment. We don’t care what you’re doing right now; we are going to do it this way.

Is that the signal we want to leave? Is that the way we want Saskatchewan to be thought of in the other parts of the world? Or do we want to be telling the people of Canada that Saskatchewan is working for compromise to the last, last minute, and that our Premier is out there working for compromise to the last, last minute — not introducing motions here, but working and negotiating and discussing. And we’re prepared to help in that compromising. I’m prepared to help in any way that I can. Is this the message we want to leave to Canada?

Mr. Speaker, I’m going to spare the House my “I love Canada” speech.

An Hon. Member: — You love yourself more.

Mr. Romanow: — And the hon. member says that I love myself more. That may be true, may not be true. But I think the minister from Melville’s comments, Mr. Speaker, I think tell everybody in this House what it’s been like in this House on this issue. You may not have agreed with my arguments, the minister from Melville, not at all. You have a right to it. I hope you do get in this debate. You can dissect . . . I tried to dissect it as best as I could rationally the arguments of the Premier and advance our position. And that, as a senior minister of the Crown, is the answer that I get.

As I say, it’s really perplexing to know what one can do. You cannot be rational in the debate because you get that response. You can’t be emotional because you’re emotional or you’re too negative. What can one do to try to get these people to do it? Someone says, ignore it. Well unfortunately you can’t because this person is influential — I hope not too influential on the Premier on this issue. I appeal to the Premier, not too influential to exhibit that kind of an attitude. And I say to the minister from Melville, it really is an uncharitable comment which is not worthy of you, sir.

Mr. Speaker, I want to close by moving an amendment which I hope captures more succinctly the message I was leaving you today about our position. And I was about to say that I will spare you my versions of why I love Canada. They are many, stemming from the immigration of my

parents from the old country in the pursuit of freedom, and other points. There are many indeed.

My first language was Ukrainian, not English. I had a tough time with English, Mr. Speaker — still do. Actually couldn't speak it when I went to grade 1, and Canada permitted that. My mother, until she died last fall, could shop on 20th Street, she could go to the St. George's Ukrainian Greek Catholic church, our church on Avenue M, and she could visit her friends and neighbours, and she could do it without speaking one word of either of Canada's so-called two official languages. Ukrainian. Canada permitted her to do that. So we all have our various reasons for loving Canada. Those are some of mine and others which I say I'm not going to belabour the House with.

I think the best spirit of Canada was captured by — well I think he's one of the noted historians of this country; I don't think this is an accurate quote because I just really jotted it down over the supper hour from the top of my head — by Father Monet, Jacques Monet. Monet is an outstanding Canadian constitutionalist, and he said something to this effect about Canada which I think captures the essence of what I'm talking about. He said, Canada is not a question of common sense or even economics. Canada, Monet wrote, is an act of the heart. And it is. It's a spirit. It's a compromise, an act of heart.

That's my plea to the government — compromise. Compromise. Go down there. Do your best. Come back, report to us. We'll do our best. We may differ politically. Country's at stake here. Go down there. Don't blow any of the progresses which we may be making. Maybe it's all a pipe's dream. Maybe it'll all collapse Sunday night or Monday night. God forbid! But go down there. Do it.

We're not going to criticize you if you try. We're not going to make this a political issue. Go down there. Compromise. That's the Canadian way. Work to the very last moment. Fight for these changes. Get these symbolic acts everywhere. Make Canada feel at home. Make the western Canadians feel at home. Get those hopes and dreams of all of us and our parents just a little bit closer to reality.

And you won't be perfect, and your document will be flawed as ours was in '79 to '82, and as previous documents are. But you will have made a single step forward in promoting what is the essence of Canada, and that is compromise and not confrontation. I beg of you, don't do this resolution at this time if you love this country — if you love this country.

And therefore, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by my colleague the member from Regina Centre:

> That all the words after the word "Assembly" be deleted and the following be substituted therefor.

I'll read the full motion. That this Assembly:

> recognizes that difficulties in the current constitutional discussions have already resulted in economic uncertainty for Canadians, recognizes that important negotiations are currently under way with respect to the content and meaning of the Meech Lake accord, and acknowledges that the people of Saskatchewan and Canada have expressed the desirability of changes and/or additions to the accord; and that this Assembly reaffirm its commitment to the preservation of a strong, free, and united Canada, and that this Assembly urge all governments and first ministers to work diligently and in a spirit of good faith to seek solutions which will be in the long-term best interests of Canada; and finally that this Assembly therefore defer further consideration of the Meech Lake accord at this time, because it would be premature to do so in view of the continuing delicate federal-provincial negotiations, and until the Premier has reported to the legislature on the final outcome of those negotiations.

I so move, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to say a few words on this. I think we are all conscious of the importance of what we're doing. I must say, try as I might to be charitable to the Premier, I simply do not understand what he thinks he is doing with this particular motion. To put it mildly, it's a bizarre stunt, Mr. Speaker. It's a bizarre stunt in the middle of negotiations to call for the capitulation of one side, which is what he's done. That is in fact what the Premier has done.

We may take any one of a number of different positions if in fact the negotiations fail. What we have coming up on the weekend is an important series of negotiations which will do a good deal to define this nation. As one would expect, there are some very strong views on what form those negotiations should take. For the Premier of this province to move a resolution which in effect wraps himself in the Canadian flag and then says the only solution is complete capitulation, if you love Canada you must do this, is a bizarre stunt.

I listened, Mr. Speaker, for some indication to the extent that that might be appropriately shared with members of the Assembly, as to the state of negotiations. Well I can well imagine that there would be information that the Premier wouldn't give us, but I felt that this House would be apprised to some extent of what had taken place over the last 10 years. Not a syllable about the state of the negotiations, not a syllable about where we were.

I looked for some indication of how the premiers thought we might find a way out of what appears to be an impasse, a very serious impasse. Not a syllable about where the way out of the thicket lay, simply I think a shallow, I think a simplistic display of tub-thumping on the nationalist drums, and then concludes with a comment that if you love this country you'll vote in favour of my resolution. I frankly, Mr. Speaker, find that offensive.

I find it offensive for someone to say, if you love this country you'll vote in favour of my resolution. The obvious implication is, if I don't, I don't love the country. And I find that offensive. I find it narrow-minded, and I find it offensive. What we got from the Premier was not a

reasoned approach — no attempt to define how we might approach a difficult problem, simply a jingoistic, flag-wrapping, drum-beating call for one side to see the wisdom of the approach of the other side.

It's been my experience, Mr. Speaker, that calls for complete capitulation are rarely successful except after violence and war. Apart from a conclusion to a war, a call for capitulation very rarely results in a peaceful settlement. There must always be something for it in each side. Each side must leave the negotiating table feeling that they have got something out of the negotiations. And until they do, the negotiations are usually irresolvable except with brute force.

(2030)

So I find the Premier's approach shallow. I find it simplistic. I am distressed that at a time such as this, Saskatchewan should suffer such amateurish leadership. And that is the kindest I can be to the current Premier of this province is to describe his approach as amateurish and shallow.

I would have liked to have heard from the Premier what his vision of Canada is. I would have liked to have had the Premier tell me what he thinks this country is composed of, how he feels about it, and how he envisions this country developing and continuing.

I want to take some time, Mr. Speaker, a little later in my comments, to develop my own vision of what this country is. I'm not suggesting this is necessarily the only vision or that it is the correct vision. But I think it is useful for members of this Assembly to enter this debate which has as its goal the defining of this country's constitution. It is useful for them to begin by telling us what they see this country as and how they envision it.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe that the Premier of this province believes that this is a useful addition to these negotiations. I cannot believe that he cannot see that his approach, as I say, which calls for complete capitulation by one side to the negotiations, is a useful addition. I think, Mr. Speaker, that in part what the Premier is trying to do is to extricate himself from a difficult situation.

Mr. Speaker, we said three years ago — and I'm going to return to those negotiations in due course, the proceedings in the House three years ago — we said during those negotiations that the process was flawed; the Meech Lake accord is flawed. But far more important than that, whether or not you agree with us, the public has a right to be heard. A constitution should not be developed in the dead of night, then presented as a *fait accompli* and rammed through the Saskatchewan legislature, as was done without any opportunity for public input.

If you want to encourage hostility in the public to your proposal, proceed with it in that fashion. The process that was adopted, both at Meech Lake, in Ottawa, and in Regina is guaranteed to encourage the hostility of the public. The whole process was designed to ensure public opinion never was brought to bear on the subject. That was one of your goals when you brought it here. If you now face a hostile public, I say to members opposite that you've earned it. You richly deserve the public hostility which you get on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, as I say, I'm going to return to that, but I believe that one of the goals of the Premier was not to settle the negotiations. I think his goal was a great deal crasser than that. His goal was to try and avert public hostility with which his approach has met. He tried to do so by wrapping himself in the Canadian flag, by suggesting that those who don't adopt his approach are playing poker with this country's future and can't possibly be interested in this country's future. I say, Mr. Speaker, that approach is crass. It was done, I believe, at least in part, for selfish, short-sighted, myopic reasons, and should have been unworthy of the Premier of this province.

There may have been another motivation, Mr. Speaker. I was distressed by the report in *The Globe and Mail*. I would use stronger terms than distressed if I thought they were parliamentary. I was distressed at the report in *The Globe and Mail* that senior public servants in Ontario had developed a paper saying we must manipulate public opinion by whipping up an hysteria and thus bamboozle and stampede the premiers who dissent into adopting the Meech Lake proposal. I say I was distressed by it.

Surely if there's any place, Mr. Speaker, where that sort of a manipulative approach should not have any role to play, is in a constitution. Surely if there's any place where we ought not to be trying to manipulate the process but ought to be doing it above board in an open and reasoned fashion, it should be with respect to a constitution. I say that, Mr. Speaker, because we have the sight of the Premier rushing back to Saskatchewan, moving this resolution which I cannot believe he thinks is going to serve to arrive at a negotiated settlement. It has every appearance of being part of that master plan to whip up public opinion so that those who oppose it are stampeded into dropping their dissent. I say if the Premier's not part of the Ontario plan, it certainly appears to be promoting the same sort of approach. This is not a reasoned approach to the problem. This is an attempt to whip up public opinion. To suggest that if you oppose it you are wrecking the nation, Mr. Speaker, I think that approach is unworthy, and as I say I think this government may be proceeding from something less than the lofty motives they suggested.

The original process was flawed. I would be surprised to learn that there is a successful nation anywhere whose constitution was born out of two sleepless nights. I defy anyone to point to a successful nation . . . and successful nations are based upon successful government structures, and that comes from a constitution. So the success of the nation is tied rather closely to its constitution. This is not a whole lot of airy-fairy nonsense that constitutional lawyers get involved in and nobody else cares about. This whole process goes to the very basis of your nation. I defy anyone to suggest a modern successful nation whose constitution was born out of two sleepless nights.

Imagine the process. You locked them up until out of exhaustion or because they're too weary to think straight or too weary to continue the discussion, they agree. I

know, Mr. Speaker, that that is a common tactic with labour negotiations.

An Hon. Member: — What about 1981?

Mr. Shillington: — I know . . . Well I'm going to get to 1981. The member from Assiniboia quite rightly asks about 1981. I'm going to get to that. That was a very different process, a very different process. The member from Thunder Creek, I'm sorry. The member from Thunder Creek, I'm sorry — the member from Thunder Creek asks about 1981. I'm going to get that. That was a very different process. Mr. Speaker, this process . . .

An Hon. Member: — It was a very different time.

Mr. Shillington: — Yes it was a different time, with different leadership. And I'm going to get to the leadership in a moment too.

What has failed this country is not the radicals. What has failed this country, Mr. Speaker, is leadership at the very highest levels. That is why we are in the mess we are in.

Mr. Speaker, the public were excluded. What we got was a constitution which had not been well thought out — which had not been well thought out, I think, by those designed it, never mind by the politicians who had to ask themselves, did it work, is it acceptable? I think, Mr. Speaker, some of the political leaders who left Meech Lake shared some of that doubt. I think the member from Estevan may have shared some of that doubt about whether or not the process was acceptable and the document was acceptable. And I think that's one of the reasons why we had no public hearings, no consultation. The resolution was brought in with very little opportunity for adjournment. It was in effect rammed through the House with some speakers from the government benches, but basically the opposition carrying that debate, Mr. Speaker.

Forging a nation, Mr. Speaker, is a process of developing an agreement upon an almost a social and political contract, an agreement around which the nation should be structured. Reference is often made to the success of the American experience. The American experience is founded upon some principles upon which every American agrees — liberty, equality. We may sometimes think that Americans lack some of our qualities; we may sometimes find them intolerant; we may sometimes say that they lack compassion. But that nation was built upon some common ideals and a common agreement as to how a nation should be structured. It was born out of a bloody revolution and that's not a happy event, but at least out of the American Revolution came something that Americans could agree upon — the structure their nation should take, the things their nation should stand for, and the direction their nation should be headed. That is what is so badly lacking in this process.

There was no opportunity for the public to be heard or contribute, Mr. Speaker. It is clear that there is wide dissent on this proposition and somehow or other members opposite, Mr. Speaker, members opposite say that that's how you build a successful nation. I say that is not the case; that's how you build failure into a nation, to force upon a nation a constitution and a system which the people do not accept. That, Mr. Speaker, is a prescription for failure, and yet it is the process that was used in this whole Meech Lake approach.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk for a moment in a rambling fashion. I have not had an opportunity to put this in a tightly knit or coherent fashion, but I want to talk for a moment about Canada and how I see this country and what my vision of this country is. Mr. Speaker, I truly believe that it was . . . one of the most influential events in defining the Canadian experience was in fact the American Revolution. I believe and I think many historians believe that following the American Revolution in which England lost the greatest colonial prize of all, a reappraisal of English policy took place with respect to colonies. Out of that appraisal developed a very different approach. The colonies thereafter were allowed and sometimes encouraged to maintain local customs, local languages, local laws. No longer did England, as it did with the American colonies, attempt to force them into an English mould. After the American revolution colonies were treated very, very differently. And we were treated very differently than were the Americans.

Thus the French, Mr. Speaker, in Quebec are different than the French who were in Louisiana or the Spanish who lived in the south-west at the time of the U.S.-Mexican War or, for that matter, the Spanish who lived in Florida. The Quebec people were different. They were given under the Quebec Act, Mr. Speaker, a guarantee of their language, a legal guarantee of their culture, and a legal guarantee of their right to continue to exist as a distinct French society.

(2045)

That was born out of the American Revolution and the English experience with the American Revolution and has defined this nation, Mr. Speaker. We may think that wise or unwise. I know thoughtful, intelligent Canadians who wish that that had not been imperial policy, that in fact those who had been conquered had been required to use the English language and English laws. There were those in England who thought that as well, but that was not what was done in this country, and thus it defined the nature of this country. And that is one of the reasons why we are so different than Americans.

Mr. Speaker, Quebec was given its guarantee, as I said, of its language, a guarantee of its culture, a guarantee of its laws, a civil code. And the culture has flourished over the years, Mr. Speaker, to the point where Quebec is a small but quite a vibrant culture in this world.

Mr. Speaker, that also affected our development. This nation was not born out of a revolution. Representing, Mr. Speaker, as I do, the downtown area, I have very few students who come to visit the Legislative Building. Most of my riding lives within easy walking distance of the Legislative Building and some come but not many.

Nine out of 10 of the groups I speak to come from a single institution. It's the Regina community college who teach immigrants how to speak English. Nine out of 10 groups

that I introduce are in fact from the same . . . go to the same class-room. As part of their course, the teachers try to bring them for a day to the Legislative Chamber.

And one of the things I say to them is that you will find Canadians very different. Unlike you — and no matter where they're from, you can be sure their countries were born out of revolution and bloodshed — unlike you, Canada has never had a revolution or a civil war. Our development has been entirely peaceful. That has given us some characteristics which are different, one of which, Mr. Speaker, is that nationalism is not in English Canada a very strong force. We are not anywhere near as nationalistic as Americans or Europeans or Germans or Russians.

I had, Mr. Speaker, the opportunity — and I'll say for the benefit of any constituents who might be watching, I had the opportunity to travel at my own expense — last year through Europe and eastern Europe and into the Slavic countries. I was struck by how strong a force nationalism was in those Slavic countries. By far and away the single most potent force in eastern Europe and the Slavic countries is nationalism. In fact, it was the force which at the time I felt the Russians had underestimated and indeed, as it turned out, they had underestimated it very seriously.

Nationalism is not a strong force in Canada. We do not measure ourselves by our country the way many other societies do. This was a nation which was born, not out of revolution and bloodshed, but out of the application of rational thought — much more so than any nation, with perhaps the exception of Australia and New Zealand, who underwent somewhat the same process.

This is a nation which has solved its problems by the application of rational thought, not with force, but compromise, negotiation, and discussion. This is a nation born out of compromise, and to some extent it shows that. That is not the case, if I may refer with every affection to our neighbours to the south. They have a very different experience. Their nation was born of revolution and bloodshed and was not born out of compromise. I was amused last year during the potash debate to hear the Premier referring to the potash debate as our Alamo. He has an affection for things American but doesn't always understand them very well.

The member from Assiniboia wants me to discuss *Romper Room*. That's more his level than mine. I intend to stay on the high road and leave questions such as the *Romper Room* to the member from Assiniboia.

Mr. Speaker, I've been at the Alamo. I remember when I was a child, Mr. Speaker, one of the shows which we used to watch was Roy Rogers. I remember as a young man being irritated and annoyed by a song that he made famous, "When you're criticizing America, you're walking on the fighting side of me," wondering how someone in the name of nationalism could exhibit such intolerance and such narrow-mindedness. He was talking about those who opposed the war in Vietnam. I felt at the time they were right and history has certainly established that those young people were right.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it's a little easier to see why a person would do that if you've actually seen what gave birth to their nation. A nation born out of bloodshed feels differently about itself. That wasn't our experience. We are a different people.

Mr. Speaker, that has been the case throughout. At a time when the English and the French in the last century were on the point of civil war, England appointed a distinguished statesman, Lord Durham, who produced the Lord Durham Report. And for a while, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that process worked. In fact it worked for a century. And compromise continued to be the foundation upon which this nation existed. Our first prime minister, the great Sir John A. Macdonald had a nickname, "Oh Tomorrow." Why? Because, Mr. Speaker, he put off any decision and put off a decision until some sort of a compromise was necessary. Nothing was forced.

Mr. Speaker, I think most people recognize that what the Durham Report forged was a partnership but one with Quebec as a junior partner, as very much of a junior partner. That worked for a century, but somewhere in the middle of this century that ceased to work very well, and some new definition was necessary.

Mr. Speaker, we have not yet completed the process of redefining that relationship. My criticism of the members opposite . . . Yes, member from Wilkie, I mean you. The criticism of the members opposite and your counterparts in Ottawa is that you have tried to hurry the process altogether too much. It is a process which takes a good deal of time, and you have not given it the time it needs.

Mr. Speaker, it might take another year, it might take another 10 years, but it is a process which simply can't be hurried, and we could do worse things than live with the situation we got. Indeed we are finding that out right now. My guess is that the Prime Minister wished he had never, ever heard of something called the Meech Lake accord.

The nation, Mr. Speaker, which was cobbled together out of these series of endless compromises, the nation which was — whether it be the Quebec Act, whether it be Lord Durham's report, whether it be the B.N.A. (British North America) Act, or indeed the Canada Act of 1982 — the nation which was cobbled together was a compassionate nation, one which was prosperous, which had, Mr. Speaker, a very high quality of life. We might be somewhere in the top 10 in terms of our standard of living, but we are at the top in terms of the quality of life we enjoy. It is a nation with an international reputation, an international reputation, Mr. Speaker, for fair play and honest dealing.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier talked this afternoon about what it means to be a Canadian. I had some experience, Mr. Speaker, with what it means to be a Canadian, and I want to relate that. Some 12 years ago, Mr. Speaker, my wife and I left northern Germany with a German car and a German driver, and drove to The Hague; arrived there at about 4 in the morning in a driving rain storm; got to The Hague and could not find our hotel.

The driver spoke some English — I could understand him — and he spoke Dutch and he spoke German. So I

assumed when we got lost in The Hague he would . . . I saw a couple of policemen. I remember saying to him, stop, ask them. He stopped the car but he wasn't getting out of the car. And he explained to me that memories of the Second World War are still remembered with some vividness in that part of Europe.

And he said, I'm not getting out of this car. With a German accent at this time of the night, I just might wind up in jail. He says, you go. I said I don't speak any Dutch at all. How am I going to ask him? So he gave me the four or five words I'd need to ask, I am lost, I want the hotel . . . .

An Hon. Member: — What does that have to do with the motion?

Mr. Shillington: — I'll tell you in a moment what it's got to do with the motion. If the member from Milestone spent a bit . . . the member from Bengough would listen, I will tell you.

I remember walking over to them, and when I saw the policeman looking at me, I knew he was right. There's something about the way they looked at the German licence plate and then at me that I didn't like at all. So when I got to him, by that time I'd forgotten the Dutch words I was supposed to. I simply showed him my passport, and there was an instant change in the way they reacted. Mr. Speaker, they flushed with good wishes. They took us to our hotel, escorted us to our hotel.

That's what it meant to be a Canadian lost in a foreign city. What it meant was goodwill and every conceivable courtesy extended. Being a Canadian abroad, those Canadians who have travelled abroad and have travelled as tourists — not as part of an official delegation where you are herded from one place to another by government officials — but those who have wandered around as tourists on their own know what it means to be a Canadian. What it means is an enormous amount of respect and every conceivable courtesy, every conceivable courtesy extended. That's what it means to be a Canadian, Mr. Speaker.

That's what has been wrought. That's what has been cobbled together by this series of endless compromises: a nation which has succeeded at home in giving its public a high standard of living; in giving its people freedom; in producing a compassionate society; and it has succeeded in gaining enormous respect overseas. That's what being a Canadian means. Being a Canadian means to me a nation which has been cobbled together with compromises, but which has succeeded grandly both at home and abroad.

I, Mr. Speaker, find our approach dull. I think that's fair to say. I think most Americans, Mr. Speaker, find us nice people but a touch dull. Our history seems dull to them. That may be. It may be that we don't have the exciting history that others do, and we may not be as flamboyant perhaps, as other nations, but we are a very successful nation, and those who feel that our history should be ignored in favour of other approaches should keep in mind the success of this nation.

Someone mentioned earlier the 1982 process. I want to discuss that. Mr. Speaker, that was not a process which was put together in two nights and then presented as a *fait accompli*. There was an endless amount of debate about that. I remember it well. I have, Mr. Speaker, during the 16 years that I have been a member of the Assembly, I have, Mr. Speaker, shared a constituency with Les Benjamin, federal member. He and I wound up on opposite sides of that debate, and I don't recall it being a terribly pleasant experience, and I'm sure he didn't either. It was a vigorous debate carried out in public.

(2100)

The Liberal views were put forward with considerable skill by Pierre Trudeau. Conservative views were put forward by the premiers, the very able Peter Lougheed, and I think to a lesser extent the premier of Ontario, Bill Davis. Pierre Trudeau had a vision of one country, two equal nations, bilingualism, biculturalism, equality among the two nations. We may or may not have shared it. We may or may not have liked the man. I may say that in addition . . . I should say rather that with the benefit of 10 years time, Pierre Trudeau doesn't look nearly as bad as he did at the time. Compared with current leadership, some of his warts appear to be a lot smaller than they were at the time.

Mr. Speaker, the Conservative view of stronger provinces and a weaker federal government, and I think that is a fair characterization of Peter Lougheed's approach, was put forward very ably by Peter Lougheed at the time. The New Democratic view was put forward by our premier. His was a view . . . His approach sought to maximize the effectiveness of government in solving the problems of ordinary Canadians. That was his one and only concern: not what is best for Saskatchewan people, not what is best for Canada, but how do we ensure that governments are most effective in dealing and solving with the problems.

Mr. Speaker, the debate in 1981-82 lasted well over a year and was fought with considerable vigour, both in the Assemblies and in the political parties and in the public as a whole. I remember, Mr. Speaker, on many occasions attending groups and talking to them about what the charter of rights or constitution might mean. When the process was over, it was never possible — because there was a separatist government in office in Quebec — it was never possible, Mr. Speaker, for us to achieve an agreement among all 10 provinces. No one ever said that was necessary, Mr. Speaker. What we did get after many months of vigorous public debate was something that everybody could live with.

It is true, I think it's fair to say in fairness to Mr. Mulroney, that the work was unfinished. It is fair I think to say that a constitutional agreement which Quebec did not agree to was an unfinished piece of work. It was not a pressing problem, not a dangerous problem, but one that was, I think it's fair to say, unfinished.

Mr. Speaker, again let's compare that process to this process. This process . . . I cannot imagine, Mr. Deputy Speaker, people the likes of Bill Davies, Allan Blakeney and Peter Lougheed being told by any prime minister that we're going to lock you up in a room. We're going to keep here until you reach an agreement. They would have

found the approach offensive, and it simply would not have been done.

I say, Mr. Speaker, that one of the reasons why Canada has lurched toward the crisis it has is because of a failure of leadership at the very, very top. As my colleague from Saskatoon Riversdale, leader of the Opposition, said with such eloquence, we have not had leadership which can define this country. We have not had people who can, in Quebec define English Canada for québécois the way Pierre Trudeau was able to with some considerable skill, and Jean Chrétien.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward with considerable interest to the contribution of the member from Maple Creek. She's got a good deal to say from her seat. We'll see if her tongue is still as lively when it's her turn to get up and speak, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what we lack at this time is leadership. This country has stumbled into this crisis, if indeed it be a crisis, because we lack leadership. What was displayed today was a lack of leadership, a childish, amateurish approach to negotiation. This, Mr. Speaker, doesn't solve the problem; this is part of the problem. What we saw today is a part of the problem — amateurish, almost a child-like approach to a serious, serious problem which requires cool heads and a thoughtful approach.

Mr. Speaker, compared with the 1982 process, this was done hurriedly, behind closed doors. The Premier this afternoon referred with apparent approval to the comments made by Allan Blakeney, the former member from Regina Elphinstone. What in fact was Mr. Blakeney's approach to the motion at that time? He moved, seconded by the current Leader of the Opposition, a call for public hearings. We said there should be public hearings. We said a nation can only be forged on some minimum level of agreement. You cannot ram this thing through and expect anything but trouble.

They didn't do that, Mr. Speaker. They indeed, except to a very limited extent, Mr. Speaker, would not even agree to reasonable adjournments. There was not even an opportunity for us to hold our own public hearings. We as a caucus thought of holding our own series of public hearings around the province at our own expense. Time was not given to us to do that. Within some real limits, within some very small limits, we were not even allowed to adjourn the debate. The debate was rammed through the House with no public input. It is conceivable, Mr. Speaker, that if there had been public input, the public would have said, well it's not the best of all worlds, but it's not the worst of all worlds, and perhaps we can live with it.

Mr. Speaker, when I travel Saskatchewan, I find enormous hostility to Meech Lake and no understanding of what it's about, no understanding at all as to what Meech Lake means. They have a feeling, as one member accurately says, the public of Saskatchewan have a feeling they've been snookered by something they don't understand. If there had been a full exposure and a full discussion allowed of this, it is conceivable, Mr. Speaker, that Saskatchewan people would have said, as they did in 1982, it's not what we wanted, but it's something we can live with.

The process which was adopted, which was ramming it through, was designed to encourage public hostility. The public hostility was fed, Mr. Speaker, by the approach of the federal government which said nothing can be changed, not a word, not a syllable can be changed. You adopt it, but you adopt it as it is.

That may be appropriate, Mr. Speaker, for labour negotiations. It may be appropriate for labour negotiations to lock people up for a couple of nights until in exhaustion they agree. But labour negotiations last a year. What we are doing lasts for ever and it requires very careful thought and discussion which should never be hurried. It may be appropriate to take a contract that's been negotiated in an all-night session to the membership and say you've got to adopt it, there's no room for any changes. That may be appropriate for a labour contract which lasts a year; it's an inappropriate way to deal with the whole process of nation building. And the problems which have resulted are precisely what was predicted when you people began this process of trying to ram this thing through as you have.

It is entirely typical and appropriate, Mr. Speaker, that the Government House Leader should try to move this motion without notice and ask us to waive notice — a completely inappropriate request, but entirely in keeping with the way this government has proceeded about this whole affair. No opportunity for discussion with the public, no opportunity for consultation, just ram it through. That's the way you dealt with the Meech Lake accord itself in Meech Lake. That's the way you've dealt with the companion resolution in this legislature, and it's the way you dealt with this motion.

And it's the wrong way to deal with it, and it has engendered precisely the public hostility and the backlash which you are experiencing. And had you gone about it in a civilized fashion and taken the public into your confidence, I think you might well have succeeded.

Mr. Speaker, in doing so, in saying as Mulroney did, that there's no room for change, he played right into the hands of the Quebec nationalists. Nationalism in Quebec means separatist, I regret to say. Not all Quebec nationalists are separatists, but he played into the hands of Quebec separatists. Because the Quebec separatists then said, and to which nobody disagreed, the Quebec separatists said ah, and if they do reject it, they reject Quebec. That's the corollary to the proposition. There was no person of any stature who said that is not the case. Merely because someone in English Canada doesn't like a jot or a tittle in the accord doesn't mean they want Quebec out of the Canadian nation. Mr. Speaker, Quebec lacked any effective answer to the separatists.

I regret to say that at a time when we had a prime minister from Quebec who has no language problems, to put it mildly — his French is every bit as fluent as his English — we had no one who could go to Quebec and say listen, I want this accord as badly as you do but don't be silly. If they don't like something, it doesn't mean they don't like Quebec; it means they have a slightly different vision of Canada than we do — we being the québécois — and we

will have to iron it out. But there was nobody to do that.

Mulroney, playing brinkmanship as he has from the very beginning, I'm very, very critical of him. I think he's played poker with Canada, with this nation, and he has brought it to the brink of some very serious problem. I won't use the word crisis because I'm not sure that's accurate, but he has brought to the brink of a very serious problem. When he said, Mr. Speaker, yes, if you reject the accord, you reject Quebec, he's playing brinkmanship. That, Mr. Speaker, is no way to build a nation.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make one other comment and then I want to deal specifically with the amendment. I will do so in a relatively brief fashion because I have done so in general terms throughout my comments. This is a large nation, a very diverse nation, and a very difficult nation to govern. It is a nation which requires compromise, constant compromise, and that's what political leaders in this country have done. Perhaps our most successful prime minister was one who excelled at little else, Mackenzie King, by compromise between the various demands made upon the central government and the various groups within this group. This, Mr. Speaker, is the opposite. This is not an attempted compromise. This is an attempt at brinkmanship.

That is really Mulroney's great failing; he substituted brinkmanship for compromise. And if indeed disaster does ensue, it will be because of that. This nation was not built on brinkmanship. It was built and founded upon rational thought, analysis, and compromise. And it must continue, Mr. Speaker, to be built and governed on the same process.

(2115)

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the particular resolutions, I have said, Mr. Speaker, that I find it bizarre. I have the greatest difficulty being charitable to the Premier. And I have every suspicion that this resolution was not brought to this House believing that it would contribute to the solution. The Premier must know one does not solve negotiations by calling for capitulation. You solve negotiations by finding a little something for everybody. Total capitulation may arise out of war, but it does not arise out of peaceful negotiation. It is what the Premier has called for in simple terms.

At the very least, Mr. Speaker, this resolution is premature. And that is why we say that a consideration of this resolution ought to be postponed until all opportunity for negotiation, discussion, and compromise are over. That is why, Mr. Speaker, we say that in keeping with the history and traditions of this country, we want the Premier — we may wish it were someone who had displayed a bit more skill in negotiations, but that option is not open to us — we want the Premier to go back, speak for western interests, bring Saskatchewan concerns to bear on those negotiations, and try and reach an agreement which everybody can live with.

A call for capitulation is amateurish, it is simplistic, and it really ought to be unworthy of this government. It's with that in mind, Mr. Speaker, that we have moved the amendment. We think the amendment is at best premature, at worst it is really counter-productive. I will therefore, Mr. Speaker, be voting in favour of the amendment.

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I voted for Meech Lake in this house in 1987, in July of 1987, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I voted for it in 1987 for the same reason that I will vote for this resolution tonight because I believe very strongly that what has been stated as the reason for Meech Lake by those who signed it is that it is just that: the vehicle through which we can bring the province of Quebec into the constitution of Canada, bring that province which is 25 per cent of the population of this country into the constitution of Canada so that the ongoing evolution of the constitution as we have known it for a good long time in the country and as will take place into the future if we can solve this problem by bringing that province into the country. And I say it's a very important and it's a laudable reason to vote for that resolution. It was in 1987. Congratulate those that signed it and the goals that they set out to accomplish at that time.

Mr. Speaker, I should add that for those watching this debate and who may have some view that the member who took his seat just prior to my coming to my feet, the member for Regina Centre, the member from Regina Centre, Mr. Speaker, I believe voted for the Meech Lake accord in 1987 as well. Mr. Speaker, the member from Saskatoon Fairview, who spoke earlier today and who led off the debate for the members of the opposition, as well, as I recall, voted for Meech Lake accord in 1987.

But, Mr. Speaker, that's why I voted for it and that's why I'm voting for it now. Now, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition in his arguments today, and he made several arguments, and as he often does and as he usually does, gave his eloquent speech here in the House, but let's just analyse what it was that he said. He said several things.

He said there was far too much emotion. He said there is far too much emotion surrounding this debate in the country. He said there was far too much emotion in the Premier's remarks today, far too much emotion, didn't contribute to the nation building as he perceives nation building. Mr. Speaker, the Premier's speech today showed a leader, a person, a nation builder in this country who has some heart and some soul and will stand and express that heart and soul with some passion. And that, Mr. Speaker, is what we need in the country in the middle of just such a debate that we have going on here. That's what we need.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — So let's not as Canadians, whether we're here in the legislature or in any other legislature or anywhere else in the country where this debate is going on — and make no mistake, this debate is going on in the far reaches of the country now — let's not as Canadians condemn those who speak with feeling about this country, because that is not the way that nation building will be done.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition had something to say about process. And he had some critical remarks

about the process that went on leading up to the Meech accord. And the member from Regina Centre talked about constitution building and a sleepless night and, etc., etc.

Mr. Speaker, it isn't long ago that throughout the country and around this province and here in this House the member from Riversdale, the Leader of the Opposition in this House and in this province wore it as a badge of honour that he was involved in constitutional amendment drafting in a kitchen. That was a badge of honour at that time, but now a process that takes first ministers in this country into a room. And I believe he was reading a quotation from a book, a recent book in the country where he was speaking with some derision about this whole process of these 11 first ministers in a room basically all alone and going through this process.

Mr. Speaker, at one time it was a badge of honour for two or three constitutional lawyers in a cold and calculated way to draft amendments. But now it's somehow a flawed process if others go into another constitutional row.

Mr. Speaker, what else did the Leader of the Opposition say? He said basically, that there is no crisis. He said there is no crisis. Mr. Speaker, people across this country are beginning, and albeit somewhat late, but they're beginning to believe — more than beginning — they do believe that there is a crisis. It's not enough for them to say there is no crisis when people believe strongly that there is.

Mr. Speaker, if we listen carefully he basically said, as I say, there is no crisis, that there's no big concern regarding this Meech Lake accord. To listen to the Leader of the Opposition, he's not worried about the fact that Quebec believes that they're not a part of the process.

How can it be, Mr. Speaker, that premiers across the country, many very distinguished Canadians believe that the need to sign the Meech Lake accord has reached the crisis level? How can it be that senior and distinguished NDP politicians in this country — politicians from all stripes certainly, but to make my point here I'll say members of the Leader of the Opposition's own party — people like Mr. Broadbent and Stephen Lewis who both believe along with Lorne Nystrom from our own province who was a member of the Charest committee, all believe that there's a need to sign the accord because that need is at a crisis level in this country right now. They all say that.

Two of the other members said there's a crisis. The member from Fairview. He said, there's a crisis, and he reasoned that there's a crisis, and he went into his reasoning about why we have reached this crisis proportion. And from his argument was is because of the methodology used by the Prime Minister because of his labour-lawyer background etc., etc. The fact remains he acknowledged in the very first remarks made in this debate that there's a crisis about in the country on this issue. So it's not good enough to stand and say there's no crisis. Mr. Speaker, I believe that there is.

What else did he say? They said, why this resolution and why now? This resolution is adding to the emotion and we have too much emotionalism and not enough of the cold, calculating constitutional lawyer sort of approach. That's basically what he said. That's the argument that was made.

Mr. Speaker, there's nothing in this resolution, nothing in this resolution presented today that precludes ongoing negotiations — nothing. Ongoing negotiation will go on. And you heard the Premier announce here today that there will be a first ministers' conference beginning this weekend and so on.

So what do we have presented to us? We have an amendment — amendment's been presented to us. The amendment basically says, Mr. Speaker, the following. It says we are badly split. Please pass this amendment which will allow us to change our minds in peace. We say there is no crisis, so there is no crisis. So don't ask us to take a position. Please don't ask us to take a position in the middle of this national debate. That's what that amendment says, the amendment presented by the Leader of the Opposition and seconded by the member from Regina Centre, the NDP amendment. That's what it says, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that is not good enough. This debate is an important debate, a significant debate, and we need to stand and be counted, say what we believe about it.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just go back to a couple of quotations from the debate of 1987 that was held in this House on the accord itself when the accord was passed by this House. And they say, why was it hurried, and I say it was prudent of us to be the first province outside Quebec to pass this accord and the resolution surrounding that accord. And I'm proud to have been a member of the House at the time and to have stood and voted at that time.

Let me just go to two quotations. They are from the former leader of the opposition, Mr. Blakeney. Members opposite who have been here — and some of them are here tonight who have been in the House longer than I have but have been here as long as I have, certainly — will know that it was my practice to stay in the House and listen to speeches that were delivered by Mr. Blakeney at various times.

But, Mr. Speaker, let me just quote from page 1272 of *Hansard* of this House of July 20, 1987, where Mr. Blakeney said, and I quote:

> I turn first to content (speaking now of the Meech Lake accord). The part of the resolution that is most important in a political and public policy sense is the recognition of the role of Quebec in Canadian society. It is of paramount importance that the constitution of Canada have full legitimacy in Quebec as well as elsewhere in Canada. (And just let me emphasize this portion.) And here I speak not of black letter law, but of political reality — of what is in the hearts and the minds of Canadians, in Quebec and outside Quebec. The resolution before us is a great stride forward in achieving this objective.

From Mr. Blakeney in this House in July of '87.

And, Mr. Speaker, on the same day and from the same speech, on page 1274 of *Hansard*, July 20, 1987, and I quote again from Mr. Blakeney, he said:

> I turn now to the significance, the importance of the resolution before us. The importance of the resolution is that it will serve in a symbolic way to complete the constitutional discussions and negotiations which proceeded during the 1970s and 1980s, and culminated in the 1982 patriation of the constitution.

And so what did we hear in the comments of the Leader of the Opposition today as he outlined Saskatchewan's role and his perception of the 1981 negotiations as it related to Saskatchewan's role and as it related to the position of the government of that day. So, Mr. Speaker, I leave that for the consideration of all members.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to get into this debate tonight because . . . not as a member of the cabinet; I wanted to get into this debate as a member of the legislature, one member who happens to be a member of cabinet, as one Canadian who happens to be from the north-western part of Saskatchewan and lived there most of my life.

(2130)

Mr. Speaker, regardless of what others say I believe that there is a constitutional crisis in the country, and I am concerned about it. I'm very concerned about it. Mr. Speaker, I know that there will be people in my constituency, people that I grew up with, people that I am very proud to represent here for a number of years, people who will have some different feelings about all of this. I know that. All of us know that. There should not be a soul in this legislature who doesn't think that there will be people they represent that will have different views on this.

I have studied some history in my life. I have taught some history in my life. I understand — I believe I do — I believe I understand the grievances, both real and perceived, that are put out by all our citizens; people in our constituencies that talk to us from time to time about this issue or about other things. And some of those grievances relate to central Canada in its wider sense, and we all have heard those things.

But, Mr. Speaker, this debate has come to the point where we who are elected to positions of responsibility must take a leadership role and we must exercise some responsibility in stating what we clearly and in stating what we believe.

Mr. Speaker, I have two children in my family and in preparing these remarks, as we all do, we think about what is it we might say, whatever. I want to be able to give an answer that I'm proud of to my kids, my children, if they ask me the question at some future time: you were in government, you were in a position of responsibility in 1990; what did you do, what did you say? I want to be able to give them an answer that I tried, that I believed strongly, the kind of thing I'm trying to express to you here tonight, Mr. Speaker. And I believe we are in a crisis situation in the country.

Mr. Speaker, what I'd like to do is to take this issue of national unity and put it into the context of the society that we are living in in 1990, and think about this. I said to one of the members who was speaking earlier, this is a different time than some of the other times that we have dealt with constitution. That's not to diminish the importance of any of them — 1980, 1971, Victoria, you can go all the way back, go back to before Confederation. There are some very, very significant junctures in Canadian history that could be characterized as almost crisis positions. I believe that to be the case as well.

Mr. Speaker, we are in a different time in this society in 1990. What is the hallmark, what is it that's the hallmark of everything surrounding our society now — right now. And if you could sum that up in one word it would be the word, change. We hear it in debates in this legislature, we hear it everywhere we go. We hear it in industry, we hear it in . . . we hear it all throughout our society now — change. Change is happening at a tremendous pace world-wide, in our local communities, in our province, in our country. I mean we don't have to . . . you would have had to have been absolutely comatose not to know that change has been coming at us at a tremendous pace in recent months.

So what has been the result of this kind of change? We turn our televisions on, we read the newspaper, we do whatever we do to keep informed of what's happening in the world. What's been the result of that? I submit that we have become almost immune, immune to the sort of . . . to thinking about the speed with which changes can take place. To the concept . . . to thinking about what are the consequences of that change, because another change is right on its heels. We've come to the view that as a society that anything's possible.

Mr. Speaker, conventional wisdom, you know we've often . . . we hear people speak about conventional wisdom, conventional wisdom would say this. Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe that conventional wisdom very often is based on the fact that there are certain constants that are there. Constants like our nation is here and it's stable. Constants like over time at least, over if you go back awhile, certainly in our society. Constants like our family. Those kinds of things which we often probably take too much for granted and have taken over our lifetimes too much for granted. But those things have been there, and they've been . . . and so we base much of our conventional wisdom on the premise that those things are there and they're absolute. But, Mr. Speaker, can we say that today even about our families? Can we say that today about our nation, I ask, in the context of this debate. Mr. Speaker, because we have become so immune to this change, people are beginning to think the unthinkable in this country. To think the unthinkable.

We've got papers prepared, we're got the economic community, the business institutions, the financial institutions and others preparing papers about well, what would Quebec do on its own? How will the rest of Canada fare on its own in this global economy that we're in? All of those kinds of things. We are beginning to think the unthinkable in this country. And that is what brings

the crisis upon us. That is dangerous thinking, Mr. Speaker.

Let me just carry this metaphor of the family just a little further, Mr. Speaker, this metaphor of the society of 1990, and just focus for a minute on families and make that comparison.

How do we look at our families and our personal relationships now? There isn't one of in this House who can't think of someone who's close to you, close friend, someone in your family, or maybe even ourselves — I can say thank God that I don't have this experience — where we've known someone who's gone through the pain of divorce. Divorce.

How does that come about? It comes about because we say and we do — we as people in this society, this rapidly changing society — we say and we do mean-spirited things to each other, and we say them over and over again. And we don't strive to understand each other very much because we're moving quickly, and the society's moving quickly, and it's kind of easy not to, and there's other avenues to go, and so on. And we don't strive to understand the other's point of view.

And then we cite irreconcilable differences, and we say there's no turning back now. Well, Mr. Speaker, just to carry on with that metaphor, in the personal relationships of marriages there's a thing that the lawyers — and there are more of them over there than there are here — but lawyers talk about things like a trial separation. Well in nations, Mr. Speaker, there's no trial separation. There is no trial separation in the context of a nation splitting.

And when does the pain really begin — to carry this metaphor further — when does the pain really begin in the case of divorces between individuals? I've had people tell me that it really begins when there is no turning back and at the point where you begin to divide up the assets of the marriage, to put it in a crass term, but what I would call the treasures of the marriage.

Just think about this. Think about the consequences. Think about the circumstance we would all find ourselves in if we can be so cavalier about this discussion that's going on in Canada now. Just think about what we would do in our various legislatures, trying to divide up the treasures of Canada. Mr. Speaker, it is the unthinkable, and we should not be allowing ourselves as citizens of this great country to think the unthinkable.

The other point, Mr. Speaker, that I want to make and it's related to this whole concept of the society of 1990, but it's a point that others have mentioned here today: how are we as Canadians and how is our country in a collective sense viewed in the world? How are we viewed by others? Now others have made the arguments and others in this debate probably will make the arguments as it relates to the economic consequences of this unthinkable idea that this country could split up — the economic consequences, whether or not international investors would look at us with any favourable odds. Well many have said clearly that they would not look on us favourably. And why would they?

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that attracts foreign investment to Canada is the political stability of this country and the fact that we are seen to have political stability. We are seen to be one of the most stable countries on the face of the earth. So that has a tremendous economic impact. Political stability, Mr. Speaker, has been the strength of our country, the very basis of our country.

Mr. Speaker, as I think about this, and if I could just paraphrase because although I'm of Scottish decent I'm not so good on the brogue, but let me just paraphrase something that was written by Robbie Burns. And it goes like this:

> Oh would some power the gift give us,
> To see ourselves as others see us,
> It would for many a blunder free us,
> And foolish notion.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what is being contemplated by some in this country would absolutely be a blunder and it is without question a very, very foolish notion.

Mr. Speaker, just the other day, just last Friday, I believe, just almost a week ago, at the opening of the Wascana long-term care facility, that wing of the facility over here, this very beautiful Wascana hospital here very close to the grounds of this legislature, the Minister of Veterans Affairs of Canada, the Hon. Gerald Merrithew, spoke to the gathered veterans there, and there were many veterans and their families, people who have served in two wars for our country.

And he spoke to them about his experience of three weeks before that, so about a month ago now, of being in Holland, in the Netherlands, and of celebrating with the Dutch people the 45th anniversary of their liberation by Canadian troops. Something like a half million Canadian troops in Holland, that small country during that period of time 45 years ago.

And he said that in a community of 120,000 people, the population of that community, there were 300,000 Dutch people, many of them, a large percentage, young people who obviously, like so many of us in this House, were not born, were not born at the time of this liberation of which I speak. And he spoke about how moving it was for him as a Canadian and as a representative of Canada, and how moving it was for the Canadian soldiers who are now stationed in Europe and who were there for this march past and the ceremonial march past that went on, to listen to those 300,000 Dutch people sing O Canada with more feeling than he had ever heard it sung in our country, by our own people, French or English. Mr. Speaker, if we Canadians could see ourselves as these young Netherlanders see us, we would surely free ourselves from a major blunder and a very foolish notion, to once again paraphrase Robbie Burns.

(2145)

So what I submit to the House, Mr. Speaker, is the following. There can be two approaches to the differences that we perceive among ourselves in Canada. We can either be cynical about our differences and look

at them as dividing forces, or we can embrace our differences and recognize the strength that they offer us.

One choice, that of looking at differences as divisive, is an overly negative approach. By cynically emphasizing the lack of similarity between Canadians, many are doing a disservice to our country. This negativism is the same force that we recognize as being the root cause of racism, of sexism, and of other forms of discrimination.

There are differences between Canadians, Mr. Speaker. That's a fact that all of us recognize in our various comments here today and at all times. We all recognize that. And we should all be aware of it at all times as well. However the fact that we have differences does not mean that we can't coexist in a way that is beneficial to every one of us in the country, regardless of where we live — from one coast to the other.

But I argue that those troubles are relatively small compared to the many positive things about Canada. The forces that hold us together — our common history, our common basic values, and our shared vision of a stable, prosperous future — are far stronger than the forces that are pulling us apart. I believe our people recognize that when we look up from the wrangling surrounding the Meech Lake accord and try to see things from a larger viewpoint, that we understand the great benefits of remaining a unified nation.

Mr. Speaker, I believe strongly that much of the cynicism that we have seen in recent weeks is terribly misguided, terribly misguided for some of the reasons that I cited earlier. People don't really want Canada to split up; maybe they just don't believe that they can do anything to help. Maybe they lose interest because they begin to feel that they can't make a difference. Maybe they believe that the consequences of cynicism are not real, that it really won't happen as we've heard here.

This kind of apathy is understandable in many ways, Mr. Speaker, but it's also very, very dangerous. Mr. Speaker, we can make a difference; we as citizens, not just we as members of this legislature. We can make a difference. If we are able to summon charitable feelings for our fellow Canadians, we'll be able to keep our country together. If not, then I fear for some of the reasons that I've outlined here that our country could split apart — once again, the unthinkable, Mr. Speaker. But I have that very distinct fear. I say that sincerely.

Cynicism is an emotion that we can't afford or succumb to, and especially now at this very, very important point in our history of Canada. Right now is the time for honest, sincere consideration of where we want to go as a nation and what we want to do as individuals. Can we search our own consciences, can we search our own conscience and decide that a united Canada is not the best option? I think not. I am sure that the majority of us will see when we look past apathy and cynicism and past wishing that there wasn't a crisis that it's far better to accept our differences and work together in a spirit of compassion and sincerity to reaffirm the strength of our nationhood.

And for those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I urge all members to support this motion to reaffirm the Meech Lake accord.

Support the motion. And I urge members to vote against the amendment for the reasons I cited earlier. We must all now stand in our places and vote with what we really believe in this time of great national debate.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure for me to be involved in this historic debate not only of Canada but of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say at the outset that I will be supporting the amendment that has been put forward. I would like to say that . . . just to make a comment on the closing comments of the previous speaker. I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, that the minister talks a lot about tolerance and understanding. And I think, Mr. Speaker, those are very important aspects of life in Canada and Saskatchewan. But I must state, Mr. Speaker, that you can't have real tolerance unless you have the real involvement of people, not only in the Canadian context, but also in the Saskatchewan context. It is impossible to have tolerance unless there is an interaction of people in Canada, not only the English and French people of Canada, but of all nationalities in Canada. I think the involvement of all peoples of Canada is extremely important.

I might state, Mr. Speaker, that tolerance is also a matter of looking at other people's views that are being presented in Canada; that there are indeed differences of opinion on the situation that is existing before us.

And I think it's very important that if you want to promote the concept of tolerance, that you cannot take an absolutist and confrontational position as was taken today in the Saskatchewan legislature.

I guess, Mr. Speaker, that this debate is important for me in many ways.

First of all, it's important for me on a personal level. On a personal level, Mr. Speaker, my background is of the various historical contexts of Canada. I might say, Mr. Speaker, that the essence of the debate in Canada can be expressed in the experience of my own short years of existence here in the province of Saskatchewan, because my background, Mr. Speaker, is also French. I have also an English cultural heritage from the province of Saskatchewan and the country of Canada. And I am also Cree.

And I also speak my language, which I have had a few times in this legislature. My first language, of course, is Cree. And I think I ought to remind the members that toleration, of course, is required for all languages in Canada. And I am very pleased that the respect of my language in this House has been upheld ever since I stepped into this House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goulet: — So you see, Mr. Speaker, this debate for me is not only of an issues nature in regards to this

legislature, but it is also a personal one in regards to my own historical background. I would like to look at the debate in different sections.

In the first place, I will present the most general aspects of the argument in regards to the international and national context, both at the present day level and in historical terms. After doing that, I will then move on to examine the position that was presented by the Premier of the province and raise some of the contradictions that were glaring in his statements.

I will then present also the issues that are a very strong concern to aboriginal peoples in Canada. I will deal with the situation of Indian and Metis people, but I might state that the implications will remain much the same way for the Innuit in Canada. I will also raise some of the other substantive issues that have been relayed to me as I met with the Saskatchewan public and also with my constituents, because I feel that these are very important as we raise both process and substantive debates . . . questions, I mean, of the resolution and the amendment.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to start out on the issue of the international context. Mr. Speaker, one of the essential questions in the world today is the issue of democracy and democratic input and democratic representation and democratic involvement of peoples throughout the world. We see the crisis of the issue relating to nationalities, not only here in Canada as we look at all the nationalities, but also and particularly the English and French question in Canada, I would also state the issues relating to aboriginal peoples.

We also look at the situation in France and the raising of the peoples — the Jewish people. And when I look at the issue also in regards to the fact of the crisis also in the Soviet Union and also the European countries, and I might add also South America, Africa, and Australia, and all the Pacific countries. So this issue of how we relate to each other as peoples is occurring in the international context.

People are trying to find different ways and means of how best we can learn to respect each other in each of our countries throughout the world, and this problem, therefore, is not a unique one to this country. It is one that is being dealt with by various countries if not all countries throughout the world.

So when we are heading into the debate I think that's important to recognize, and that there have been many different types of solutions. Some that have simply not worked, some working moderately, and others that are working a little bit better.

So, Mr. Speaker, let's recognize that this is not a unique problem to Canada. It is indeed an international question that needs to be dealt with by many countries of this world as we look into the future of not only the 1990s but past the year 2000.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Being 10 o'clock, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

The Assembly adjourned at 10 p.m.