

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, June 20, 1990.

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Speaker: I would like to draw Honourable Members' attention to the gallery where we have with us this afternoon from the McLeod School twenty-five Grade 5 students, and they are under the direction of Mrs. Atsumi O'Dagushi. This school is located in the constituency of the Honourable Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Neufeld).

On behalf of all Honourable Members, I welcome you here this afternoon.

Also with us this afternoon, in the loge to my left, we have Mr. Larry Desjardins, former MLA; and also Mr. Gordon Johnston, a former MLA.

On behalf of all Honourable Members, I welcome you, gentlemen, this afternoon.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if there would be agreement to proceed directly to Orders of the Day?

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to proceed directly to Orders of the Day? Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No? There is no leave? No.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD Meech Lake Accord Proposals - Senator Murray

Mr. Elijah Harper (Rupertsland): Mr. Speaker, this is a question for the First Minister (Mr. Filmon). Senator Lowell Murray and a group of representatives of the Prime Minister of Canada came to Winnipeg on Monday to meet with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. They presented a set of proposals in the name of the Prime Minister which were rejected by the Chiefs.

The Chiefs were of the view that the proposals were not certain and did not remedy the fundamentally flawed provisions of the Meech Lake Accord and the companion resolution. They did not address the needs of the aboriginal people of Manitoba and Canada. Would the First Minister please indicate his views on the proposals made by the Prime Minister and the reaction of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, obviously the Prime Minister and his senior advisors were attempting to find a means of resolving the differences that the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs have with respect to the Meech Lake Accord and various wrongs historically that have been brought upon the aboriginal people of this country and this province. Obviously, those proposals that they have put forward were not seen to be adequate to address the concerns of the aboriginal people of Manitoba; and, indeed, the leaders of the aboriginal people, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, in responding to that, were being consistent with respect to the issues that they have raised in the past, that they have raised with me, that they have raised with Members of this Assembly, that they have raised with the federal Government. I have absolutely no quarrel with their right and their determination to insist upon fair treatment and to insist upon reasonable treatment in redress of the many wrongs that have occurred over many centuries.

* (1335)

Public Hearing Limitations

Mr. Elijah Harper (Rupertsland): My question is to the First Minister again. After the meeting with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, Senator Murray, who was here under the authority of the Prime Minister of Canada, held a press conference during which he suggested, among other things, that the Government of Manitoba do whatever was necessary to limit or suspend their holdings of public hearings on the Meech Lake Accord and the companion resolution. As you know, Mr. Speaker, that suggestion flew directly in the face of Rule 36.1 of the rules of this House.

Will the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) tell us his view on the undemocratic and offensive position taken by Senator Murray with reference to the suspension of the democratic process in Manitoba and the limitation of public hearings, particularly in light of the First Minister's own comments that the constitutional process in Manitoba is the envy of all Canadian jurisdictions and people?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I found it somewhat ironic that Senator Murray was suggesting that we ought not to be bound by procedural tactics that were being used within the use of the rules of our Legislature, rules that were set down to protect the democratic rights of not only every Member of this Legislature but indeed of the people of Manitoba, the right to be heard on any proposal for constitutional amendment and the right to have a specified process under our rules to respect the need to debate, discuss and consult on constitutional matters.

I found it ironic that Senator Murray should express grave concerns about using rules for tactical purposes to block passage when it is he who, as the advisor to

Joe Clark, then Leader of the federal Conservative Party, came up with the idea to utilize the bell ringing tactics as a means of hijacking the business of the House of Commons until the patriation resolution could be turned over to the Supreme Court in 1981. I found that indeed ironic, Mr. Speaker, and of course with the full support, not only of the Members on this side but on that side of the House, I rejected outright his criticisms and suggestions.

Aboriginal Rights Premier's Position

Mr. Elijah Harper (Rupertsland): My question is to the First Minister. Mr. Speaker, the events of the last days in Manitoba have been truly remarkable. It is one of the few times in Canadian history that the difficulties of aboriginal people have been the focus of attention. It is one of the few times in history that unfairness of our systems as they affect aboriginal people has been detailed. It is one of the few times in history that the aboriginal people have been taken seriously and have seen to be legitimate.

Mr. Speaker, will the First Minister share with all Manitobans, in fact with all Canadians, his view what can and needs to be done to bring fairness, justice and dignity to the aboriginal people of this province and country?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, first and foremost we need to re-establish a bond of trust and understanding between the aboriginal peoples and all peoples in society in Manitoba and in Canada. There is no question that over decades, indeed over centuries, there have been many, many instances in which I think very just cause has been given to create an atmosphere of distrust and alienation between the aboriginal peoples and the rest of the peoples of our country. During those circumstances, of course, aboriginal peoples have been indeed very patient and indeed very long-suffering with respect to the wrongs that have been committed and indeed the injustices that have been done.

* (1340)

I believe that it would be very important for us, flowing from whatever are the results of the deliberation and the debate in which we are currently engrossed, that we come forward with a commitment to work co-operatively with the aboriginal peoples of Manitoba and Canada to ensure that first and foremost they are recognized in our Constitution as a fundamental characteristic, as a distinct part of the identity of Canada from their origins and indeed their continuing place of prominence in our country.

I believe that we ought as well ensure, in matters that deal with their rights and their concerns, that the utmost consultation, co-operation and involvement take place with the aboriginal peoples so that we can set aside those past efforts and those past failures and begin again in a new era of working together with our aboriginal peoples to create a better future for them as well as all of us in this country.

Constitutional Affairs Negotiation Process

Mr. Elijah Harper (Rupertsland): My question, Mr. Speaker, is of the First Minister. At Meech Lake three years ago, aboriginal people did not have any role in Constitution-making. During the week of meeting between the First Minister in Ottawa this month, aboriginal peoples again were kept outside the doors of the meeting, excluded from equal participation in discussions. No one citizen of a First Nation was given a voice or had a role in the talks between 11 non-aboriginal men. Once again, as aboriginal people have seen throughout the history of Canada, the making of the Constitution was done with the aboriginal people on the outside looking in.

Will the First Minister indicate his opinion about the process of Constitution-making that excluded Canada's first citizens?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I think that, first and foremost, we ought to recognize that there are in place certain constitutional requirements that state the way by which issues are discussed and issues are determined. Members are duly elected to our various Legislatures and Parliament of Canada who are there to represent the interests and the concerns of all people.

Indeed, there are people of all different races, backgrounds, colours and creeds within our Legislative Assemblies and within the Parliament of Canada who are sent there on behalf of the people who elect them to work on their behalf.

We in Manitoba asked for the participation by way of having them as observers to the delegation as we had as observers to the delegation the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the New Democratic Party who were consulted and who did indeed participate very fully in the process of preparation of the Manitoba position and indeed of review of the ongoing dynamics of what was happening during the period of that week in Ottawa.

The representative, the head of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, was invited similarly to be an observer and a part of that delegation and refused on behalf of his people. I think that was regrettable, Mr. Speaker. I believe that there was a role to be played. There was an opportunity that was missed by the lack of that participation. Having said that, I understand the reasons why Mr. Fontaine turned down that invitation, and I understand as well his desire to see on behalf of his people a greater participation at the table.

I might say that the Leaders of the Opposition Parties and I, in coming back with the package that included additions by way of companion resolution, felt that we had made some achievements in that we had added a separate constitutional round of discussions on constitutional matters that affect aboriginal peoples and that the aboriginals would be at the table for those discussions. We felt that was a step forward that would enable the aboriginal peoples to have their issues put on the constitutional agenda and be at the table for those discussions.

* (1345)

We are committed to continue to work toward that process, and we are committed to ensure that happens; but I might point out to the Member for Rupertsland (Mr. Harper) that in 1987 his then leader, the Premier of Manitoba, Mr. Pawley, leader of a Government and a Cabinet of which he was a part, did not say anything about the lack of aboriginal presence at the table, did not suggest that the things that he is asking for now were lacking then and indeed they carried through with their process and they did not have aboriginal presence at the table at that time for the very same reasons that they were not there at this time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Harper: Yes, Mr. Speaker, the First Minister pointed out about my role in the last constitutional conference and also the resolution was never tabled. I might indicate to this House, I advised the Premier then that I would not be supporting the resolution then and I still do not support it.

Aboriginal Participation

Mr. Elijah Harper (Rupertsland): Mr. Speaker, my question to the First Minister is this. Aboriginal people have complained about their exclusion from the constitutional process since 1867. The response of Governments has been a string of vague promises which have never been kept. Aboriginal peoples are tired of words and no actions. Our interests, our rights, our very dignity continues to be threatened by the process dominated by the First Ministers.

Will the First Minister outline the proposals he will bring forward in this House and to his fellow First Ministers to bring the aboriginal peoples to the table as full and equal participants in all constitutional talks?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): I think that is a matter upon which I would like to have some consultation with the aboriginal peoples of Manitoba, that I would like to have some consultation with those who have views and proposals that they ought to bring forward. I think that we ought to look at the assignment of responsibilities and powers and jurisdiction within our Constitution at the present time and look for ways in which we might accommodate the legitimate concerns of aboriginal peoples. That is not something that I have a proposal to put forward on at the present time, Mr. Speaker, and I would be very happy to engage in discussion, consultation with the aboriginal peoples of Manitoba in the near future on that matter.

Aboriginal Self-Government Premier's Position

Mr. Elijah Harper (Rupertsland): My question is to the First Minister. Between 1983 and 1987 four constitutional conferences were held on the extremely important issue of aboriginal self-government. All four conferences ended in failure. We the aboriginal people were talking in good faith. We had many proposals, all of them were rejected by the First Ministers. The conferences failed to move an inch toward aboriginal self-government because of the lack of commitment

on the part of the First Ministers, except for the First Minister from Manitoba.

Will the current First Minister tell the House today the strength of his commitment to self-government and how he intends to persuade his fellow First Ministers to accept and implement self-government, and how quickly he intends to act in this regard on such a critical issue for aboriginal people?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I have said before that I am committed, as is my Government, to the principle of aboriginal self-government and that I would be very, very pleased to work with the aboriginal peoples of Manitoba as we define the concept and define the specifics of such a proposal.

I know that there were indeed extensive discussions and the Member for Rupertsland (Mr. Harper) was a part of those discussions at those constitutional conferences and represented this Legislature as the Minister of Native Affairs. During that period of time, there was a growing consensus. I believe that in the end there were approximately six provinces that were ready to sign an agreement and proceed with a constitutional amendment with respect to Native self-government, but in the end it did collapse. To some degree, I have been told by people from Quebec that it was the fact that Quebec was not at the table, that Quebec was supportive of what was being discussed and indeed the proposal that was on the table. We will never know that, Mr. Speaker, until we have an opportunity to get back to the table, to get back to the constitutional table, and discuss those sorts of proposals.

I repeat for the Member for Rupertsland that indeed we are very happy to be a willing, an active and a productive participant in those discussions in future.

* (1350)

Territorial Governments Provincial Status

Mr. Elijah Harper (Rupertsland): My question is to the First Minister. When Manitoba became a province in 1870, only the federal Government needed to give its approval for the creation of new provinces. In 1982 the rules were changed. Now the federal Government and seven provinces must agree on the granting of provincial status to a territory.

There are two large territories in Canada. The majority of the populations in both is aboriginal people. Their fundamental right to self-determination is now subject to the whims and narrow interest of provincial leaders. Is the First Minister committed to the creation of new provinces in the territories and Yukon, and when, and how?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Indeed, Mr. Speaker, I am committed to ensure that a reasonable process is retained for the creation of new provinces from the territories. I have had many extensive discussions over the past couple of years. I have met on numerous

occasions with Tony Penikett, the Leader of the Yukon, and with Dennis Patterson, the Leader of the Northwest Territory Governments, and on all those occasions said that I would like to have a less restrictive formula for them to become provinces.

During those discussions, I might say—because I think there was an implication from the Member's question that this was something that he was expecting would happen immediately—neither of those territorial leaders indicate in their discussions that they believe that they are ready to become provinces in the immediate future. What they want to do is to ensure that, should they arrive at that determination at some time, they would not be unduly restricted by virtue of the unanimity clause that was in Meech Lake.

I might say to you that the companion resolution, which we signed in Ottawa some close to two weeks ago now and that was to be introduced into this Legislature to be debated along with the Meech Lake resolution, says about the creation of new provinces and the territories, and I quote: "The Prime Minister and all Premiers agreed future constitutional conferences should address available options for provincehood including the possibility that, at the request of the Yukon and the Northwest Territories to become provinces, only a resolution of the House of Commons and Senate be required."

I agreed with that proposal, as did the Leaders of the two Opposition Parties in Manitoba, because we believe that is an appropriate goal for us to work towards. Under those circumstances, I did sign this agreement along with all other First Ministers to try and make it less restrictive for the territories to become provinces.

Aboriginal Rights Canada Constitution - Section 35

Mr. Elijah Harper (Rupertsland): My question is to the First Minister. In 1982, some aboriginal rights were finally recognized in the Canadian Constitution. I do not need to remind the First Minister of the long and difficult struggle of the aboriginal people for recognition of any of their rights.

The First Ministers in 1982 were hostile to entrenching our rights. We had to take our fight to Great Britain. Even then at the last minute some of the First Ministers tried to wipe out any mention of our rights. Section 35 which protects our rights is weaker than we the aboriginal people want it because of the opposition from some provinces.

Will the First Minister indicate to this House the extent to which he supports strengthening the constitutional protection of our rights in Section 35? What means will he take to convince other First Ministers to do the same?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, throughout the discussions in Ottawa I went forth with the position of the Manitoba Meech Lake Task Force Report, which was that we ought to have two things: one, in the round of future constitutional negotiations we ought to

have a separate aboriginal constitutional process which had been recommended very strongly by the representatives of the aboriginal peoples in Canada to the Charest Committee; secondly, that the aboriginal peoples would be recognized as a fundamental characteristic of our country, as was put forth in the Canada clause of our Meech Lake Task Force Report.

I have always indicated my desire to ensure that aboriginal rights are protected, maintained and enhanced in this country to ensure that the aboriginal peoples do not need to fear anything of their rights being attacked by virtue of any constitutional negotiations.

* (1355)

Aboriginal Rights Supreme Court of Canada Ruling

Mr. Elijah Harper (Rupertsland): My question is to the Attorney General (Mr. McCrae). On May 31, 1990, the Supreme Court of Canada released its first judgment on Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution. The judgment of the Sparrow Case is a big victory for aboriginal peoples. Most lower courts across the country had given Section 35 a narrow interpretation. The Supreme Court of Canada has clearly stated that aboriginal rights do exist with constitutional protection and must be taken seriously by all governments.

Will the Attorney General tell the House whether he and his officials have reviewed this most important decision and what plans they have developed to give effect to the principles and guidelines in that judgment?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, it is true that the Sparrow decision of the Supreme Court of Canada did indeed recognize the need for a broader recognition for protection of aboriginal rights in our Canadian society.

The Honourable Member asks how that decision will affect the way we conduct our business here in the Province of Manitoba, and as has been the custom with this Government, the custom has been to respect decisions made by the Supreme Court of Canada. Officials in my department are reviewing the Sparrow decision with a view to ensuring that Manitoba adheres to the spirit and the letter of that decision.

Bill No. 79 Aboriginal Exemptions

Mr. Elijah Harper (Rupertsland): My question, Mr. Speaker, is to the Attorney General (Mr. McCrae). Recently this Government amended the municipal property tax assessment. In the process it repealed the provision in the old Act which exempted taxation on all lands in trust for, and I quote, "tribes or bodies of Indians." That exemption has been recently confirmed by the Manitoba Court of Queen's Bench. I understand that the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, through its legal counsel, has requested that the Government of Manitoba refer to the Manitoba Court of Appeal the question on whether the appeal of the

exemption violates the protection of aboriginal and treaty rights guaranteed in Section 35 of the Constitution.

Will the Attorney General please tell this House whether he has recommended or will recommend that a reference be made to the Court of Appeal on this issue and if not, why not?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): As I recall, Mr. Speaker, in respect to the development and passage of Bill 79 in the Legislature, that Bill dealing with this matter had the support of all of the Parties in this House.

Some Honourable Members: No. No.

Mr. McCrae: In any event, Mr. Speaker—some Honourable Members shout “no.” In any event, the question of the policy with respect to assessment and taxation is a matter of responsibility for the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Penner).

I will see to it that the question the Honourable Member puts is brought to the attention of the Minister of Rural Development. My department, as the Honourable Member would know, acts as a law office for the departments in the Government, and I would be pleased to bring the matter to the attention of the Minister of Rural Development.

Treaty Rights Implementation

Mr. Elijah Harper (Rupert'sland): My question, Mr. Speaker, is to the Attorney General (Mr. McCrae) again. On May 24, 1990, the Supreme Court of Canada released a most important decision on treaty rights of aboriginal people. The case is called *Sioui*. The court stated that the treaties are sacred documents. That must be understood from the perspective of aboriginal peoples.

The Supreme Court stated in no uncertain terms that the treaties are binding obligations on Governments and that the terms of the treaties must be respected by Governments. There are treaties that operate in Manitoba that are still not fully implemented by the Governments. Will the Attorney General tell the House whether he and his officials have reviewed the decision, the directions and the policies they are developing to give effect to the treaty rights in line with the judgment?

* (1400)

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I will take the question raised by the Honourable Member with officials of my department.

Aboriginal Justice Inquiry Recommendations

Mr. Elijah Harper (Rupert'sland): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Attorney General (Mr. McCrae). The testimony heard by the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, headed by Mr. Justice Hamilton and Judge Sinclair,

presented a terrifying picture in the treatment of aboriginal peoples by the justice system in Manitoba.

The inquiry's report has not yet been released, and we do not know what will be its final recommendations. However, we know that the major recommendation for reform will be forthcoming. Many of the recommendations will need to be implemented quickly and urgently. Can the Attorney General describe for us the actions being taken now by his department to prepare for the insurance of the recommendations and to ensure that they are put into operation as soon as possible?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): The Honourable Member is correct when he says that none of us know at this time what the recommendations of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry will be, but I agree with the Honourable Member that is no reason not to attempt to be prepared for or to anticipate possible recommendations that might come forward. There is a multidivisional team of my department that is at work, people representing the corrections area of my department, people representing the courts, people representing the probation and so forth.

The various divisions of my department are indeed meeting, and it may be that I might have the opportunity later this month perhaps to do a paper, to make a presentation with respect to the efforts that our Government is making to attempt to be ready for the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry's report. That being said, Mr. Speaker, it must be recognized that the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry must be free to do its work, must be left alone and not interfered with in any way. We expect and hope that the report of the inquiry will be coming to us this fall, and we are doing everything we can to attempt to be ready for that report when it comes.

Native Education Government Initiatives

Mr. Elijah Harper (Rupert'sland): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach). Education policies of Governments towards the aboriginal people in the past have been one of the most tragic burdens suffered by first nations. No Member of this House needs to be told about the importance of education to any people. Knowledge is the guarantee of a better future and of economic prosperity and self-sufficiency. Knowledge and training are critical for self-respect and dignity.

Will the Minister inform the House in a meaningful way what steps his department has taken and will be taking to ensure that all aboriginal people in Manitoba receive the best possible education in their own language and about their own culture so as to acquire the skills and knowledge they require to take their rightful place in Canadian society?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, may I say, first of all, that over the last few months the Minister responsible for Northern and Indian Affairs (Mr. Downey) in this province

and myself have been negotiating very actively the preservation of the Access Programs that indeed are so important to aboriginal people throughout this province. Yesterday, I released the High School Review. For the first time, the Department of Education and Training is seeking an advisory committee on Native education in this province to ensure that we have representatives from the grassroots of our Native communities throughout this province that can have something to say about the needs of educational programs and the direction that education takes for Native people in this province.

Aboriginal Adoptions Repatriation

Mr. Elijah Harper (Rupertsland): My question is to the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Oleson). For decades in this province the Government engaged in an adoption policy which forced aboriginal people into non-aboriginal homes across North America and around the world. Thousands of aboriginal people were denied their culture, their heritage and their dignity. The vast majority of these adoptions have resulted in failure and tragedy. The Kimelman Report of 1983 called this policy cultural genocide. The Manitoba chiefs and the media have recently focused attention on the overwhelming problems faced by the aboriginal people who wish to return to their aboriginal families.

Will the Minister inform the House what steps she and her officials are taking to correct the injustices done in the past and to help aboriginal children return home to their families and communities?

Hon. Charlotte Oleson (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, as the Member will know, the department, of course, the Child and Family Service Agencies do not practise that any longer. Children are not sent out for adoption. Every attempt is made to have Native children adopted in Native homes. I also will say the Member is no doubt aware also that every attempt is made to help people to be repatriated when the department becomes aware that there is a problem. We cannot, because of confidentiality and so forth, give out names and have everyone searched that has been adopted out. That is not the purpose. When we learn that a child or a person has come into difficulties then every attempt is made to give them assistance.

Aboriginal Child Care Centres Government Initiatives

Mr. Elijah Harper (Rupertsland): My question is to the same Minister. As the Minister knows, child care needs of all families are sorely under-financed and unavailable in Manitoba. Good day care for children in Manitoba is difficult to find and very expensive. This is true in the case of aboriginal children both in urban areas and in the rural and remote areas. Aboriginal children suffer uniquely, because there are so few trained aboriginal child care workers. Centres would focus on their language and culture and programs to help with the transportation of the children.

The Minister has said that she is sensitive to the needs of children in this province but to my knowledge

has not indicated her understanding of the unique needs of aboriginal children to day care services. Would the Minister do so now?

Hon. Charlotte Oleson (Minister of Family Services): I have indicated on many occasions that my department is working with the aboriginal people with a view of setting up aboriginal child care centres in Winnipeg. In fact there is one being negotiated and worked on at this time and we have set aside funds in the department for that purpose.

Treaty Rights Health Care

Mr. Elijah Harper (Rupertsland): Yes, my question is for the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard). For decades aboriginal people have been fighting for their treaty rights to health care. The federal Government has the primary responsibility for health care protected under treaties. However, health care generally is shared responsibility of the federal and provincial Governments. Furthermore, the Government of Manitoba has an interest in ensuring that all citizens enjoy the best health care available.

Can the Minister advise this House as to what steps he will take to persuade his federal counterpart and the federal officials to give full effect to the treaty rights to health care of aboriginal persons?

* (1410)

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, the issue that my honourable friend brings on indigenous health matters is very much a discussion that has been before not only this Government but previous Governments. We are very serious about our ability to provide needed health care services to all Manitobans.

The issue surrounding Native health issues is one, as my honourable friend identifies, of split jurisdiction and responsibility.

Let me tell my honourable friend that we have taken a number of steps in the last two years in an attempt to better make available health care services to those Native Manitobans who are resident and far from the normally accessible health care system. For instance, at our major teaching hospitals wherein there are admittance privileges, if you will, from our northern nursing stations, we have developed and continue to develop culturally sensitive health care delivery programs so that those northern Manitobans of Indian origin who speak Cree are able to communicate in their native language at the St. Boniface General Hospital, for instance.

Recently a member of the Department of Health in northern Manitoba, an indigenous woman working with the ministry, was sent to the Indigenous Peoples Health Conference in Yellowknife in the Northwest Territories, wherein she presented Manitobans' programs and policies to an international conference involving experts in indigenous health matters from Russia and from other

northern nations. That is all part of an ongoing effort that we have been making on this side of the House, this Government, to assure quality health care to the indigenous peoples of Manitoba.

Hunting/Fishing Regulations

Mr. Elijah Harper (Rupert's Land): My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns). The Manitoba Queen's Bench has recently upheld the treaty right to hunt migratory birds in Manitoba. The court acquitted Mr. Flett on the charge of unlawful hunting and possession because he was exercising his treaty right. Since the Manitoba judgment, the Supreme Court of Canada has firmly recognized aboriginal and treaty rights in two recent judgments. However, aboriginal persons who exercise their treaty right to hunt are still being harassed and charged and prosecuted by provincial officials.

Can the Minister explain to this House why provincial officials continue to deny the right of the treaty Indians to hunt despite the court rulings, and what is the Minister prepared to do to uphold the court rulings and respect the treaty right to hunt?

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Natural Resources): Mr. Speaker, I have given specific instructions to my resource officers to respect the traditional treaty rights enjoyed by our aboriginal people with respect to hunting and fishing, and I believe most of them are aware of that.

There are instances where charges are being laid that do not involve the treaty rights, but in fact where weapons are being used in a dangerous or non-safe manner under which terms and conditions the charges will continue to be laid from time to time.

Manitoba has led, Mr. Speaker, I might add, in this way of addressing this problem at a recent wildlife Ministers' conference held in Quebec City some months ago. We had this item on the agenda, dealing specifically with the matter that the Honourable Member raises. I am not satisfied. I have raised the matter specifically with the Attorney General (Mr. McCrae) with respect to some standing cases that are being held in abeyance. We are dealing with the problems raised by the Honourable Member. I hope that through a form of co-management that we can come to a position where both the concerns of my aboriginal brothers and that of the sustenance of the wildlife can be met.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae),

WHEREAS the Constitution Act, 1982 came into force on April 17, 1982, following an agreement between Canada and all the provinces except Quebec; and

WHEREAS the Government of Quebec has established a set of five proposals for constitutional

change and has stated that amendments to give effect to those proposals would enable Quebec to resume a full role in the constitutional councils of Canada; and

WHEREAS the amendment proposed in the Schedule hereto sets out the basis on which Quebec's five constitutional proposals may be met; and

WHEREAS the amendment proposed in the Schedule hereto also recognizes the principle of the equality of all the provinces, provides new arrangements to foster greater harmony and cooperation between the Government of Canada and the governments of the provinces and requires that conferences be convened to consider important constitutional, economic and other issues; and

WHEREAS certain portions of the amendment proposed in the Schedule hereto relate to matters referred to in section 41 of the Constitution Act, 1982; and

WHEREAS section 41 of the Constitution Act, 1982 provides that an amendment to the Constitution of Canada may be made by proclamation issued by the Governor General, under the Great Seal of Canada, where so authorized by resolutions of the Senate and the House of Commons and of the Legislative Assembly of each province.

NOW THEREFORE the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba resolves that an amendment to the Constitution of Canada be authorized to be made by proclamation issued by His Excellency, the Governor General, under the Great Seal of Canada, in accordance with the Schedule hereto.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the Honourable First Minister, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae),

WHEREAS the Constitution Act, 1982 came into force on April 17, 1982, following an agreement between Canada and all the provinces except Quebec; and

WHEREAS the Government of Quebec has established a set—dispense?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: —of five proposals for constitutional change and has stated that amendments to give effect to those proposals would enable Quebec to resume a full role in the constitutional councils of Canada; and

WHEREAS the amendment proposed in the schedule hereto sets out the basis on which Quebec's five constitutional proposals may be met; and

WHEREAS the amendment proposed in the schedule hereto also recognizes the principle of the equality of all the provinces, provides new arrangements to foster greater harmony and co-operation between the Government of Canada and the Governments of the provinces and requires that conferences be convened to consider important constitutional, economic, and other issues; and

WHEREAS certain portions of the amendment proposed in the schedule hereto relate to matters

referred to in Section 41 of the Constitution Act, 1982; and

WHEREAS Section 41 of the Constitution Act, 1982 provides that an amendment to the Constitution of Canada may be made by proclamation issued by the Governor General, under the Great Seal of Canada, where so authorized by resolutions of the Senate and the House of Commons and of the Legislative Assembly of each province.

NOW THEREFORE the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba resolves that an amendment to the Constitution of Canada be authorized to be made by proclamation issued by His Excellency, the Governor General, under the Great Seal of Canada, in accordance with the schedule hereto.

The Honourable Government House Leader.

* (1420)

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, at page 10 of the Order Paper there is another proposed motion standing in the name of the First Minister (Mr. Filmon). I wonder if there would be agreement to debate these motions concurrently?

Mr. Speaker: Would there be agreement of the House to debate these motions concurrently? No? There is no leave for that.

The Honourable First Minister, on his motion.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Eighteen months ago yesterday I withdrew from the consideration of this House a resolution supporting the Meech Lake Accord. Today, I am reintroducing that resolution as well as a companion resolution which addresses a number of the specific concerns that were raised in public hearings throughout Manitoba last year.

The introduction of these motions is part of the commitment I made to my fellow First Ministers in Ottawa on June 9. This afternoon, I want to briefly outline to you some of the key events that have transpired since this House last considered the Meech Lake Accord. I will outline the goals we set through the public consultations of the all-Party task force and the concrete gains we were able to secure in Ottawa two weeks ago. The path we followed from December 1988 to the reintroduction of the Meech Lake Accord today was a long and difficult one for all of us.

When I withdrew the accord from debate I wrote the Prime Minister to warn that Quebec's decision to proceed with Bill 178 would create a backlash in Manitoba that would doom the accord to failure. I informed the Prime Minister that we would not proceed with the resolution at that time and asked that he convene a meeting of First Ministers as quickly as possible. When the meeting finally took place at the end of February 1989, New Brunswick Premier Frank McKenna and I convinced the other First Ministers that we were not bluffing, that we had serious concerns that would have to be addressed if there was any hope for the Meech Lake Accord.

While that meeting had its difficult moments, I left convinced that the other First Ministers had a clear

understanding of our concerns and that the political will existed to continue discussions. Once it was clear that a dialogue would continue I returned to Manitoba to establish an all-Party task force, which was chaired by Professor Wally Fox-Decent, to provide the Government of Manitoba with a clear understanding of the concerns of the people of Manitoba. That task force reported at the end of October with a consensus report. That report not only said what was wrong with the Meech Lake Accord but indeed it offered a positive alternative.

I believe that task force and its all-Party consensus provided a clear demonstration of leadership from Manitoba to all Canadians. We showed Canada that it was possible to put aside our partisan differences as we considered what was best for Manitoba and what was best for our country as a whole.

We have been able to maintain our non-partisan consensus throughout the last nine months despite heavy pressures and deliberate attempts to try and divide us. Other jurisdictions have indeed begun to follow our lead. Both Ontario and Alberta brought their Opposition Leaders with them to the First Ministers' Meeting in Ottawa 10 days ago. As well, the federal Government established its own all-Party committee chaired by Jean Charest, which also developed a consensus report.

During the meetings in Ottawa the week before last I received strong and consistent support from both the Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) and the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Doer). Strong pressures were directed against us to try and split us apart. Misleading stories were leaked which attempted to blame the Leaders of the Parties across the floor for the failure to reach an agreement, but they both held firm and indeed because of our continued consultations, our continued discussions, Manitoba was better served as a result.

I would like to commend both the Member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs) and the Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) for their advice, for their assistance and for their unfailing commitment to the Manitoba Meech Lake Task Force Report, and the people of Manitoba, and the people of Canada throughout these very difficult deliberations over the past number of weeks and well beyond. They have played a meaningful role in the process. They have been just as subject to the pressures and the stresses, not only from people across the country who favour the accord, but indeed from people within their Parties, within their Parties nationally, within their Parties perhaps even in this province, people who put pressure on to try and convince Manitoba and convince Manitoba's Leaders to accept less than what we ultimately were given as a result of our firm convictions in our discussions in Ottawa.

Over the past month we have used the Task Force Report as our guide. I think we can best judge our progress by looking back at the recommendations from the Manitoba Meech Lake Task Force Report. The task force identified a number of weaknesses with the accord. It expressed concern firstly with the narrowness of the fundamental characteristics identified in the Meech Lake Accord and suggested that they be

remedied by expanding that section into a Canada clause that would say that first and foremost we are all Canadians, that would recognize our aboriginal origins and our aboriginal people as a fundamental characteristic, that would recognize as well our multicultural heritage and the fabric of this country and this province that comes and flows from that multicultural heritage, again as a fundamental characteristic.

The task force identified concerns about the impact of the distinct society clause on the Charter of Rights and the specific impact on gender-equality rights by their exclusion from Section 16 of the Meech Lake Accord and suggested turning Section 16 into a rights protection clause.

The task force provided a number of recommendations regarding Senate reform, including the creation of a Manitoba task force and including the fact that Senate reform ought to be given top priority in future constitutional negotiations. The task force has well noted that Manitobans favour an elected and equal Senate. The task force noted the exclusion of the territories from the provisions for nominations to the Supreme Court and the Senate and suggested wording to address that oversight.

The task force also noted the controversy surrounding the spending power provisions and recommended that they be deleted. The amending formula was also an area of great concern. The task force suggested that changes to the Senate, the extension of existing provinces into the territories and the creation of new provinces remain under "the seven provinces and 50 percent of the population" formula instead of the requirement for unanimity that was contained within Meech Lake.

In considering future constitutional conferences, the task force recommended that constitutional matters affecting aboriginal peoples be added to the constitutional conference agenda and that aboriginal representatives be invited to participate at the table in those talks. The task force also recommended that elected representatives of the Yukon and Northwest Territories be invited to participate in any constitutional conferences when items are discussed which directly affect those territories.

Finally, the task force addressed the issue of process and recommended that hearings be held after the First Ministers develop a proposal for constitutional change and prior to the signing of the proposed constitutional change.

Mr. Speaker, I say this in all honesty: we did not get everything we wanted at the Ottawa First Ministers' meeting. You never can in any set of negotiations, especially when you have to work with a document and an agreement that was indeed signed by 11 First Ministers at the time that it was agreed to. Indeed, in order to amend that document, in order to change that document, in order to make additions or changes that would be productive for Manitoba, we would have to take them away specifically from another province. Despite those difficulties we did indeed make some progress and some worthwhile progress.

So today we are not only dealing with the reintroduction of the Meech Lake Accord, but we are in fact dealing with a companion resolution, with five specific constitutional amendments that address the concerns of the task force. The companion resolution is also consistent with the concerns raised during the hearings of the Ontario, New Brunswick and Charest committees. All First Ministers have committed to pass that companion resolution by virtue of their signatures on the agreement which we brought back from Ottawa.

We have made a major step forward towards the goal of an inclusive statement of our nation's fundamental characteristics in our Constitution. An all-Party committee of the House of Commons will be established to listen to people across this country to develop a Canada clause that we can all live with. That commission will report to the First Ministers' conference this fall with its recommendation.

* (1430)

We could not settle on a Canada clause in Ottawa. There were simply too many diverse opinions for the definition of the fundamental characteristics of Canada to be settled in that hothouse atmosphere. However, we do have a recognition of all First Ministers that we need a Canada clause to make a more inclusive Constitution. We have a commitment to develop that clause in an open process that allows Canadians to have exactly the same opportunity that Manitobans did in coming before a committee of Parliament. It allows all of those people, whether they be aboriginal, whether they be multicultural, regardless of their background, regardless of their concern, to appear before a parliamentary committee holding hearings on that Canada clause to ensure that when we come up with the proper wording and indeed the proper statement of the fundamental characteristics of this country that it will be the product of extensive consultation right across the country.

We have a commitment to an open process not only for that particular clause, but indeed for the Senate reform proposal that is in the companion document. Indeed, we have a commitment to a much more open process as a result of the fact that many, many provinces right now are embarking on changing of the rules for constitutional amendments so that they overcome the concerns that were expressed time and time again at the Manitoba Meech Lake Task Force about the process that led to Meech Lake.

I believe that we have made agreement on a Canada clause more achievable by separating the Canada clause from the Meech process and easing the amending requirement from unanimity to one of seven provinces representing at least 50 percent of the population. We have a clear deadline from which we will address that particular process and that issue.

We have also received a legal opinion which will form part of the record of that Ottawa conference that states, in the opinion of some eminent jurists, the manner in which the distinct society clause interrelates with the Charter of Rights, and the opinion of those eminent jurists states that it does not threaten the rights and

freedoms that we enjoy today nor does it give Quebec any new powers. In that respect, Mr. Speaker, we have the opinion having been put forward by those eminent jurists, having been accepted by all First Ministers and appended to their document, and indeed we will not be able to have the argument that Quebec gives a different meaning to the distinct society clause than does the rest of the country because of their attachment to that opinion.

We have also made progress in the protection of our fundamental rights and freedoms. We have established an ongoing review of the Constitution of Canada, including the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, to ensure that the courts do not misinterpret the intent and the meaning of the agreements that were arrived at either in Meech Lake or in the companion resolution and document that was signed in Ottawa on the 9th of June. If that review identifies any concerns, the First Ministers are committed to addressing those concerns with constitutional amendments. In addition to those general actions, we have specifically included gender equality rights in the non-derogation clause so that the distinct society clause does not affect them.

We were also able to secure a commitment to Senate reform that is every bit as strong as the commitment that was given to Quebec for this current round of constitutional negotiation. It was the commitment that was given in the Edmonton declaration of all First Ministers when they said that arriving at a constitutional amendment to allow Quebec to become a part of the Constitution in a willing way, a signature to that Constitution, would be the No. 1 priority of First Ministers in the immediate future of Canada. That statement and that commitment resulted, of course, in very short order, less than a year, in Meech Lake having been developed and signed by 11 First Ministers.

We now have that same commitment to Senate reform. It is now stated as the key constitutional priority in the next round of constitutional reform. A commission with equal representation for all provinces will begin cross-Canada consultations this summer and report to a separate constitutional conference on Senate reform by the end of this year. That reform proposal that has been given to the commission will be based on principles that the Senate should be elected, should have more equitable representation of the less populous regions in the country, and should have effective powers to ensure that the concerns and the issues of the less populous regions are given greater effect in the decision-making in Ottawa.

Manitoba will have a veto on that reform, as will every other province in this country and if it does not take place by 1995, there will be an automatic redistribution of Senate seats in favour of the West. The Senate under this proposal would now become a block of 32 seats. Added to the two territorial seats, they could combine with any other of the regions of Canada, whether it be Ontario or Quebec or the Atlantic provinces to control a vote in the Senate.

We secured an agreement to constitutional amendments which will see the territories able to nominate Supreme Court justices and senators. We were not able to secure any changes to the spending

power provisions, and I expect that will be a legitimate cause for concern of many people here in our province and here in this Chamber. We were also not able to secure changes to the amending formula provision, although we do have a commitment to review the provisions for admission of new provinces.

We have, however, achieved more than was expected for future constitutional conferences. As I mentioned earlier, Senate reform will become the key constitutional priority in future conferences, the same wording as was given in the Edmonton Declaration.

Further, the Yukon and Northwest Territories will be invited to attend both constitutional and economic conferences to discuss agenda items which directly affect them.

The First Ministers have agreed to establishing a separate process to address aboriginal constitutional issues with a specific conference at least every three years with representatives of aboriginal peoples at the table. Finally, it has been agreed to formally review the constitutional amending process as part of the Section 49 review. I think even more important than that, formal commitment is the political reality that the people of Canada will never stand again for this kind of closed-door process that we have seen that led to this agreement.

In concert with the Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) and the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Doer), I am convinced that we secured all of the improvements that were possible in this round of negotiation that we undertook in Ottawa during that week. We have done our part. Now it is up to the people of Manitoba and the Members of this Legislature to pass judgment on those efforts that we put forth in that week in Ottawa.

I might say that I was careful not to sign away any of the rights of the people in this Legislature who have been duly elected and have the responsibility to represent those who elected them in making decisions in this Legislature.

When I signed that communique in Ottawa a week ago last Saturday evening, it contained certain specific provisions, provisions that were important to me, important to the Leaders of the Opposition Parties and important to Manitobans.

The first provision of that communique under item 1 states that the Premiers of New Brunswick, Manitoba and Newfoundland undertake to submit the Constitution Amendment, 1987, for appropriate legislative or public consideration and to use every possible effort to achieve decision prior to June 23, 1990—appropriate legislative or public consideration and use every possible effort to achieve decision prior to June 23, 1990.

* (1440)

I think that is important to repeat, Mr. Speaker, because when I take a look at the comments that were made yesterday in Ottawa, comments that I believe are in the realm of revisionist history, comments that were made that suggested that we made a commitment to pass this resolution, I say to you that this is very

important, because this is what the Prime Minister said yesterday in the House of Commons: "I can tell you this, if I gave you an undertaking to pass something in the Canadian House of Commons on the 9th of the month by the 23rd, 10 days would not have elapsed before something took place." The Prime Minister knows what is in that communique, Mr. Speaker, and I would hope that he would reread it so that he knows what our commitment was, because like my predecessor, Mr. Pawley, he knows that First Ministers do not commit constitutional amendments to passage, this Legislature does. That is the final decision.

To the people of Manitoba who wondered whether or not their rights to a public hearing process were indeed in some way diminished by that agreement, I say again, and this was important to each of the Leaders who were with me at that time, talk has been made about the asterisk that was under the signature of Clyde Wells of Newfoundland. There is an asterisk under my signature on behalf of Manitoba which says "subject to the public hearing process."

Again, Mr. Speaker, I want it to be understood that we at all times kept faith with the people of Manitoba and said indeed they would have the process that was committed in our rules to be there to work on their behalf whenever we brought back this resolution to the Manitoba Legislature to be dealt with.

Each of you as Members of the Legislative Assembly are going to have to go through the same process that I went through in Ottawa, that indeed your Leaders went through in Ottawa. You are going to have to look deep inside yourselves to ask if we have achieved enough.

Both of the other Leaders and I have already gone through that process. We know what each of you will be going through as you examine your hearts, you examine your souls, you examine your minds and you examine what is at issue here for Canada, for Manitoba and for the people we represent.

You will have to put aside the anger that all of us feel at the tactics of fear and manipulation that have been used against us and continue to be used against us. If there is anger in my voice from time to time these days, you will know why it is. I am sure you will understand what it is that each of us had to go through as we arrived at the final conclusion that we did in our conscience and using the best judgment that we had available to us, because that is why people put us in this place, to use our best judgment, to take into consideration all of the facts, all of the issues, all of the concerns and considerations that we have on the table before us when we make that judgment.

I made my judgment, Mr. Speaker, and I will say very clearly that I made my judgment to say that the package that we brought back was better than what we had when we went to those discussions and that it contains significant improvements that allow me to support that particular package in this Legislature.

I think that Members must try and keep an objective view as they make their determination. Put aside the distortion of our position and our motives that appear

day to day in the national media. Give a chance to the people of Manitoba to share their fears, their concerns, their hopes and their aspirations with you as you come to your own conclusion on this matter. I insisted on it. I know that the other Leaders insisted on it, and we wanted to ensure that the process would always respect our commitment to the rules of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, in sharing some of the ways in which people arrive at conclusions about a matter as important as a constitutional amendment, I want to share with you some of the thoughts and the views of some people whom I respect and I know are respected by people in this Legislature and indeed across the province and the country. I harken back to an individual I have often quoted and I have often indicated my respect for, the Honourable Duff Roblin, the former Premier of this province. He said these things back in January of this year before we had to come up with a resolution to the impasse to Meech Lake.

I will just quote briefly from the article in the Winnipeg Free Press of January 22. In an interview Roblin, a former member of the Mulroney Cabinet, suggested the federal Government has done less than a brilliant job selling Meech Lake. That is an understatement if I have heard one. In the process traditional Canadian values of bargaining in good faith have not been universally employed by some politicians. That was back in January, Mr. Speaker -(interjection)-. That is another understatement, is right.

What he did say about the Meech Lake Accord and the prospects that we faced in attempting to come to grips with it here in Manitoba was, and I quote, "If you start out with a position that you never will change, then there is no point in debate, is there?"

Indeed, we were faced by that kind of prospect by many, many people that we sat with, that we debated with over many months, indeed more than a year. Publicly they said they would not make any changes. I think thankfully, Mr. Speaker, they did eventually come to the realization that additions, that a companion resolution, that recognitions of the real concerns had to be made by virtue of additional constitutional changes and went some way to achieving those changes to address those concerns that we in Manitoba had.

He said, among other things, I think if reasonable changes were proposed then we would have to expect reasonable Premiers to accept them. I always believed that when we went to Ottawa for the discussions we were asking for reasonable changes. The Charest Committee believed so. They, in an all-Party committee report, suggested that most of the material, most of the recommendations in the Manitoba Task Force Report, in the New Brunswick Task Force Report, indeed in the Ontario Select Committee Report and so on were not unreasonable things to be asking.

He said another thing. One way to dismantle the present gridlock over Meech Lake is to agree on a concrete plan for Senate reform at the same time, possibly in the form of a parallel accord. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, that is one of the elements of the parallel accord or the companion resolution we bring forward.

He said one final thing, Mr. Speaker. I always took the position, particularly when I was in public life in

Manitoba, that my primary responsibility was to protect and develop the interests of the people of this province, but I always had a rider. I said, I am from Manitoba, but I am a Canadian first; that has always been my position, and I think that is the proper position. I do not disagree whatsoever with Mr. Roblin's views on that.

I repeat for you, Mr. Speaker, those things were said in an interview in January. If you look at that as a blueprint against which to check how we fared in the discussions in Ottawa, I think it does not make for bad reading. I think it does not do our efforts any disservice.

To show you the importance of hearing people and listening to them about their concerns and the differing views that they have, many of us in this House listened to people throughout the Meech Lake Task Force Report a year ago. The task force heard some very good presentations, some very strong presentations, about the clause and the accord.

I guess I was somewhat surprised today to pick up today's paper and find an article by Professor Allen Mills, not known as a political friend of mine, so I say this in a non-partisan way. Indeed one of the strengths, I think one of the great lessons that we have taught to the people of Canada is that constitutional matters are far too important to be dealt with in partisan terms, that if there is anything in which you should set aside your partisanship, it is in creating fundamental changes to the laws that will govern us, that will be entrenched in our Constitution for a long, long time, maybe forever.

So I am not unhappy to quote from a member of the public, a professor who is not a political soul mate of mine, who appeared in fact before the Meech Lake Task Force. I had to get out some old press clippings to just make sure, but he appeared in opposition to the accord and indeed said some things that were not very complimentary to me in the process, but today he says in the Winnipeg Free Press, and I quote, "If the efforts of our three provincial Leaders have failed to move the constitutional mountain of Meech Lake, they have, I believe, achieved substantial political gains. They have rewritten the constitutional agenda of this country and they have accelerated the tempo of constitutional change," both major accomplishments in his view.

He goes on to list some of the changes that are in the companion resolution: the gender-equality rights protection, the Senate reform, the role of the territories, linguistic issues and the aboriginal constitutional matters, Mr. Speaker.

* (1450)

He goes on to say in arriving eventually at his conclusion and the conclusion is in the headline to the story, I might say: Meech Lake deal should be passed for the good of the nation. He says, and I quote, "I am convinced that the failure of Meech Lake will bring economic and political disasters. Let me say that if this country breaks apart it will never be put back together again and that there will be lost a noble, political experiment in decency, tolerance and equity."

I quote him, Mr. Speaker, because that is the kind of evolution of thinking that I believe has gone on with

many people. You know, many of us in our own political discussions in our own Parties and with the people that we know throughout the community have seen that kind of changed thinking take place over a period of the last year and a half.

Then ultimately when we came back with the package to Manitoba that we believed, that all three Party Leaders believed was worthy of support, we did indeed feel that we had made sufficient changes to be able to arrive at a conclusion that would allow us to support the package with amendments.

I would like to also quote to you from another constitutional expert. It may become obvious when I read it for some while as to who this individual is. It may not and so I will reveal it at the end, but this is someone who is dealing with the very thorny issues that all of us are facing with respect to a constitutional amendment. I quote, I confess that I do not entirely approve of this Constitution at present, but sir, I am not sure I shall ever approve it, for having lived long I have experienced many issues of being obliged by better information or fuller consideration to change opinions even on important subjects which I once thought right but found to be otherwise. It is, therefore, that the older I grow the more apt I am to doubt my own judgment and to pay more respect to the judgment of others.

Most men, indeed as well as most sects in religion, think themselves in possession of all truth and that wherever others differ from them it is so far error. Though many private persons think almost as highly of their own infallibility as of that of their sect, few express it so naturally as a certain French lady who, in a little dispute with her sister said, I do not know how it happened, sister, but I meet with nobody but myself that is always in the right."

(Mr. William Chornopyski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair)

In these sentiments, Sir, I agree to this Constitution with all its faults, if they are such, because I think a general Government necessary for us. There is no form of Government but what may be a blessing to the people if well administered. I believe further that this is likely to be well administered for a course of years and can only end in despotism as other forms have done before it when the people shall become so corrupted as to need despotic Government, being incapable of any other.

It goes on and on and the quotation is of course from Benjamin Franklin about the U.S. Constitution and about the great struggles that ensued as people everywhere criticized and believed it was not sufficient to meet their needs.

I have certainly struggled a great deal with my own thoughts about the accord, about the companion resolution, about the many, many things that the people of Manitoba and the people of Canada look to us for in this debate. I have some personal observations I would like to share with Members of the Legislature about the most difficult week of my life thus far.

It seemed almost a blur as I arrived back in Winnipeg and took a look at the date on my watch and found

that it was a week since I had left. I had spent all of that time, somebody said, 77 hours in a closed-door meeting in a room that had no windows, with 10 other people who eventually, I suppose, I came to know better. If there was one thing that I felt was worthwhile in the exercise, it was the fact that virtually every First Minister, from the Prime Minister right through, in their closing remarks denounced the process that had led to the original Meech Lake Accord and indeed to the changes and additions that came to us by way of the companion resolution and other agreements in the document we brought back from Ottawa.

Never again, they said, would Canada have such a constitutional amending process; never again would they permit themselves to go into this kind of hothouse bargaining; and never again would they permit a process whereby issues would be raised and decided upon without the benefit of public consultation and committed to in writing by First Ministers without a commitment to have them aired and discussed by the people of their provinces and the people of this country.

We know that however minor the legislation is that we consider in this Legislature, there is a process whereby we introduce and debate the principles and then we go to the public and ask them what they think about it before we have to come back here and make our final judgments. Amendments are a natural part of every process in developing legislation in this province and this country. Why, on something as important as a Constitution, would you say no amendments are possible and public input is not important to the process? That is absolute lunacy, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If we learned anything by this process, and if I was pleased in any way, it was because virtually every First Minister agreed with that conclusion, which was a conclusion of the Manitoba Meech Lake Task Force Report and certainly has been of this Legislature and people right across the country. Indeed, a number of the Premiers proudly told me that their rules would be changed in their Legislature to accord with our rules to allow for the kind of constitutional amending process with mandatory public hearings that we have in this province. I heard that from New Brunswick, and I heard that from Newfoundland, and I heard that from Nova Scotia, and I heard that from other provinces and indeed from the Federal Government. That pleases me and ought to please everybody in this Legislature.

The Manitoba process was lauded, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because people believed it was the right way to go. That is why I have great difficulty when people are now saying we should subvert the process and we should in some way throw the process aside because they do not like what is happening with the process.

Since we returned from Ottawa, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the past 10 days, I think, have been even more difficult for all of us because, and I will go a little bit into the thoughts that went through my mind, the discussions that I had in the course of the time that led ultimately to the production of the package of companion resolution and document that we brought back; but since we have had some very, very difficult times as well because of the way in which what has happened in Manitoba has become a source of so much

controversy across the country, it has been difficult for all of us. Indeed, that week in Ottawa, and indeed the time since we have returned, has put great stresses and great pressures on everybody in this Legislature, not the least of which has been the leaders of each Party.

I think in some ways it has brought out the best and it has brought out the worst in people in this province and right across the country. The best that it has brought out, in my judgment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has been the non-partisan, unflinching commitment to doing what is right in this process that has been shown to me by the leaders of each of the Parties in this Legislature as part of the process. The fact that we have indeed set aside all of our partisan interests, all of our differences, and we indeed have many of them—and all I would need to do would be to go on some other topic, and I know I would spark an immediate response from the Opposition Leaders, but I know that I can say with great conviction, as the Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) has said, that I will have some difficulty getting my partisan suit back on when next that question period arises in which we get into the fray again.

* (1500)

We had the most honest and open communication that any of us could ask for. We probably bared our souls and shared all the information we had available to us in those discussions and left ourselves very vulnerable to the thought that one of the other Leaders might, on some impulse, utilize the information in a partisan way that could, in fact, be very damaging to any one of us. It never happened, and it will not happen, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that bond of trust we developed is something that will be very meaningful to me regardless of what we do together or apart throughout the course of our careers in public life.

The worst of all, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has been the pressure tactics that we have had to deal with, and indeed those pressure tactics were generated perhaps out of positive motives, perhaps out of motives of real commitment and concern, but the threats, the coercion, the intimidation, the manipulation that we experienced during the course of the last couple of weeks have not been I think a credit to democracy and have not been a credit to our province or our country.

I have to tell you that I do not just lay that blame at the feet of any one individual or any group of individuals, because as much as though I was offended by it, as much as though I was upset by it when it happened in Ottawa, when it happened as part of the process we were involved in, it has carried on since we have returned to a great degree. There is a great deal of intimidation and coercion in the course of our daily contacts by virtue of the kind of telephone calls, the kind of messages we are getting, the kind of letters we are all getting.

I say that I hope we can set in place a process that allows for the public to feel a part of whatever we do in future with respect to constitutional change so they are not driven to such fits of frustration that they take it out by some very negative actions and some very

negative ways of dealing with their elected representatives. There are indeed—and several Members of this House have been subject to the kinds of threats and coercion and intimidation, perhaps even worse in Manitoba than we experienced in Ottawa. I regret that very, very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I hope there will be a cleansing take place after this issue has been dealt with so that we never again have to deal under these kinds of pressure situations with something as important as our Constitution.

In my perspective the rules that we have put forth in this Legislature, and they have been lauded right across the country, are the most open and democratic rules that prevail anywhere in this country. We respect those rules each and every one of us. We fought hard to have those rules here, and we do not want those rules to be changed, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We respect the rules and we respect the freedom of speech that each and every one should have in this province. We hope that everyone else looking at us will do the same and respect our rules, respect our process, respect our right of freedom of speech and ultimately our right to determine what we believe is best in our conscience for our province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have watched many people go through a great deal of agony in this process. I have watched Members of my own caucus, I have watched Members across the way, going through a very agonizing period as they are subject to a great deal of pressure from people who perhaps disagree with what we brought back from Ottawa, but I say to them that we have lived through the process, we have done everything we could to prepare ourselves to deal with the proposal that we bring back. In the final analysis, none of us are going to say that this is a time of joy, that we got everything we wanted or that there are no concerns that were left unaddressed.

In the final analysis, the best thing that we can say to the people of Manitoba is we did our best. We put forth a proposal that comes with additional changes, a companion resolution that will in fact enhance what was in the Meech Lake Accord and allow it in my judgment to be acceptable to the people of Manitoba. That is my judgment and I do not suggest that it is anything else. Those who want to criticize it can find plenty of criticism. The immediate reaction that we got from some were to say that there is absolutely no certainty that the parallel resolution that you are bringing into this Legislature is required to be passed by the other Legislatures in the Parliament of Canada. Even though you have the signature of each First Minister, to say that they will indeed take to their Legislature for passage that companion resolution, you do not have certainty. I will be the first to say that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

To some degree, it may be that we have to put certain things in the realm of faith and trust, just as the Leaders of the Opposition Parties and I had to put a great deal of faith and trust in each other in the course of our deliberations that week. In the final analysis, the things that we were told by the Premiers and the leaders of the country, they said to us that if the symbolic date of June 23 is that serious a problem for the Province

of Quebec, then maybe the ultimate gesture of trust, of healing, of trying to bring together this country in unity will be that we have to put some faith and trust in them to carry through their commitment on this matter.

Maybe that is not so bad, because of all of the disruption, because of all of the acrimony and the bitter divisiveness that has occurred in this country over the past year or more, that maybe ultimately we need some healing, and part of the healing process will be the fact that we have to put some trust in each other. That is part of what was in my consideration, part of what was in my thinking, when we came back with the package that we did to Manitoba.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was going to talk about some of the things that have been said by people in this country even in the last 10 days, people who have said that we should change our rules here in Manitoba, but they do not want to change their rules in their province, people who have given us advice to subvert the very democratic and open process we have in Manitoba. In fact, the ultimate, of course, suggestion that is being made is that we ought to impose closure on a constitutional amendment debate at a time when we have not even had public hearings, and when we have perhaps three days in which to debate and listen to the public that we ought to impose closure on that. Those are the kinds of advice that I say do not do credit to the people who give the advice.

We have been open and honest, and the one thing that I can say and that the Leaders of the Opposition Parties can say is that throughout a very difficult week in Ottawa and indeed in the weeks and months that led up to it, time and time and time again we were on the record of telling everybody in this country, but particularly the First Ministers, that our process was going to be respected.

I have an excerpt from the speech that I gave at Osgoode Hall Law School in Toronto on January 25, 1990, in which I said that we ought to be getting together and trying to resolve this impasse by the 31st of March, at that time, so that we would not have any way in which our process would be subverted or would be used to frustrate the passage of an accord and a companion resolution, but people did not listen. As time went on we went through time and time and time again, each of us in our own way, making it known publicly, making it known directly to the Prime Minister in writing, we needed to have time to respect the Manitoba process. Never at any time did I say that we could do it in less than three and a half, four weeks maximum. We were not given that opportunity by virtue of the decisions that were made by others, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

* (1510)

Now when we are faced with a choice that has been given to us, that is being urged upon us by at least one Premier in the country, to set aside our democratic process in the interests of the country, I have to question, Mr. Deputy Speaker, ultimately what good is a Constitution and a democracy if indeed you have to

set aside democracy in order to achieve it? It does not seem to make sense to me.

There are two elements to the commitments that I made in Ottawa. First, I committed to make every effort to secure a decision on this matter by June 23. I have made every effort, and I will continue to make every effort, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There was a second element to that commitment, a recognition that the Meech Lake Accord and the companion resolution would be considered under the rules of our House and specifically undergo the public scrutiny guaranteed by our rules. Every First Minister was told that by me personally in Ottawa. When the Prime Minister signed the communique, he signed with the full knowledge that our process was guaranteed here in Manitoba.

What I ask each Member of this Legislature to do is put aside the very real and legitimate concerns about the process, the pressure, the tactics that were used in arriving at this decision and instead, as best as they possibly can, do what the Leaders and I ultimately did, stand at the brink and look at the alternatives, ask yourselves whether or not the package that we brought back was good enough to achieve many of the concerns, and ask yourselves what the alternative is, because when we had the public hearing process in Manitoba last year people were asked, what would you do if you could improve the accord, give us your best recommendations for change, and they did.

Now we have only one choice and that is whether or not the package that we brought back, Meech Lake plus the companion resolution and other commitments in the communique, is better than nothing at all. Nothing at all involves uncharted waters. I cannot predict, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what degree of economic, social and political chaos and disruption we will have in this country. I cannot say with any certainty what Professor Mills is saying in his judgment will be economic and political disasters.

The one thing I think any of us will have to admit is that those uncharted and uncertain waters ahead of us with the disruption that would occur in this country and the anger between English Canada and Quebec, the anger that will occur over a failure to achieve some agreement constitutionally, will have serious negative repercussions, how serious I cannot tell you. Whether they be short term, whether they be a matter of months, whether they be long term, I cannot tell you that. But because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have always said that I try and deal in certainty, that I try and deal with situations and eliminate risks—that is my training as an engineer; over and over again, you design structures, you design buildings, you design facilities to eliminate risk, risk to the public, risk to the people who may have to utilize those major works—I would like to arrive at this decision in such a way as to eliminate, or as much as possible, reduce the risk of separation of Quebec and disruption economically, socially and politically to this country.

People have said to me, you cannot do that. You will never be able to ensure that Quebec does not separate even with the accord. I have to acknowledge that as a valid, valid statement, but at the same time I would rather that if Quebec has to separate, it will be because

they make that choice on their own, not because it is seen that one province or two provinces or one area of the country in some way does something that forces them out. I would rather that this be an inclusive country. I would rather that this be an inclusive and unified nation, that we can in fact go forward and deal with the many, many challenges and issues that face us.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

Heaven knows, Mr. Speaker, we are faced with tremendous challenges economically. We are faced with high interest rates that are crippling our economy. We are faced with trying to deal with all of the structural changes in our economy as a result of the Free Trade Agreement, trying to take advantage of the opportunities that are there, attracting investment, ensuring that our dollar remains reasonably strong and secure and that we have in fact ongoing opportunities for our people.

All of those things are going to require tremendous energy and commitment by our Government and every other Government in this country and I would like as much as possible, Mr. Speaker, to be able to devote all of my energies to those major challenges. I believe that we ought to consider, consider wisely, respect our process, and in some way find a way to ensure that we can have a unified country by virtue of the passage of the Meech Lake document, the companion resolution, and the things that we brought back from Ottawa.

As I indicated earlier, I feel very strongly that this is a matter that all Members will have to examine their consciences in order to see where they stand on it, but my decision, based on all of the things that I have shared with you today, is secure. I believe this package is worthy of our support.

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, M. le président, I thank the House for the opportunity to address them all today.

J'ai l'occasion aujourd'hui d'ouvrir un débat qui me permet de prononcer le plus important discours de ma vie. Les individus ont rarement la chance de se prononcer sur des questions qui ont une importance fondamentale pour notre nation, pas seulement aujourd'hui mais aussi pour l'avenir. Nous allons discuter le Canada que nous laisserons à nos enfants et nos petits-enfants. C'est une question qui donne lieu à des échanges émotifs car l'unité nationale est un sujet passionnant. Cependant, M. le président, je lance le défi à chacun et à chacune ici de ne pas oublier que c'est bien notre avenir qui est en jeu et que malgré nos opinions divergentes nous sommes obligés de coexister harmonieusement.

(Translation)

Mr. Speaker, I have the opportunity today to open a debate that permits me to make the most important speech of my life. Individuals rarely have the opportunity to state their views on issues of fundamental importance to our nation, not only today but in the future. We are going to debate the Canada that we will leave to our children and our grandchildren. This is a matter that gives rise to very emotional debates, because national

unity is a very gripping subject. However, Mr. Speaker, I challenge each and every person here not to forget that our very future is at stake and that in spite of our divergent opinions, we must co-exist harmoniously.

(English)

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak today about what it is to be a Canadian and what it means to me to be a Canadian, because as the Premier (Mr. Filmon) has said, we must be first and foremost Canadians, and secondly, Manitobans.

I consider myself a very fortunate Canadian indeed, born in Nova Scotia, having spent some of my life in the Provinces of Ontario, Alberta and Manitoba, and to be married to someone who was born in Quebec, educated in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, spend part of his working years in Labrador, and also has lived with me in Alberta and in Manitoba. We have managed throughout our lives together to spend time in each and every one of those provinces as well as all other provinces and at least the Northwest Territories.

We have heard a great deal in the past few days from our founding peoples, the French and the English, and always we leave out our first peoples, our first nation. I cannot speak for them, because I have never walked in their moccasins and I do not know what it feels like to be an aboriginal in this nation.

* (1520)

I am, as part of my heritage, part of both of the founding peoples. My mother's family has been in this nation in a small community called Arichat near the fort of Louisbourg in Cape Breton or Cape Breton, since the 1700s. My dad's family was potato famine Irish and came shortly after the potato famine in the 1840s. So when Canada was put together in 1867, I suppose it is safe to say that my family was represented there.

Although I lived in this nation and although as a child I spent time in the Nova Scotia Legislature learning what democracy was all about, it was the time that I spent outside of Canada that made me understand what this nation is indeed all about. When I chose to do my master's degree in the United States and chose to stay there for two years after that, I learned just what it was to be a Canadian.

Many of you in this House know that my own daughter has recently graduated from an American university and I could not be with her because I was in the pressure cooker of Ottawa. It is wonderful to have her back home and to talk to her about her own sense of national identity and to realize that the same thing has happened to her, that it is her four years in the United States that has made her even more proud to be a Canadian and all those things which Canada represents. We are fierce nationalists in our family as I believe are the other 56 Members of this House.

For me, Canada is an expression in a number of ways. First of all, to me it is the gentleness of the Canadian society that speaks so eloquently to me, our social programs, our equalization payments, our whole

sense that all Canadians wherever they live should be treated with some right of equality and equal treatment one with one another. It is also the respect that I think Canadians have always held one another in and yet that is what I found so devastating in Ottawa in the week that I spent there, because the respect that I expected Canadians to show for one another did not seem to be there. There did not seem to be the respect for our Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the respect for the Premier of Newfoundland (Mr. Wells) that I believed was not only a respect to them as two human beings and two Canadians, but also a respect given to the fact that they represented in their personage the peoples of their provinces.

I believe also that fundamental to my Canada is our willingness to protect the minority rights of others. Canada has not always had a pleasant history, and this province has not always had a pleasant history. It is not difficult to ask someone who is a Canadian of Japanese origin how they felt about the events of World War II where they were singled out for intolerable treatment, treatment that we have now recognized and apologized for. We have also rejected many other peoples and unfortunately, and all too tragically and all too often, they have been people whose skin colour is different from our own, or whose religious affiliation is perhaps different from the norm.

The fact that we imposed a head tax on people of Chinese origin who came to this nation, but we did not impose it upon anybody else is a reflection I think of the fact that their skin was yellow. The fact that my colleague from Kildonan's people, the first Sikhs who arrived in this nation were turned back, and I cannot but believe that it was because of their skin colour. My colleague from Fort Rouge knows that people of his religious beliefs were turned back by this nation only because they were Jewish, at a time when they needed our umbrella of protection and when we were not prepared to provide it for them.

So, for me, making us feel more Canadian means making us feel more equal, making us do away with skin colour, making us do away with the religious differences that exist. In my experiences in the United States when I would watch, somewhat amazed and somewhat bemused when they all put their hands over their chests and they swore allegiance to their flag, I knew it was a mark of respect. Yet I knew they were not as tolerant a society as we were, and I said: What is that mark of respect to your flag if you cannot teach your citizens in a sense of equality one with one another? Canadians have difficulty with that, you know. We are not a very emotional people. We find it tough to even sing the words to "O Canada!", let alone sing them in two official languages. We do not find it easy. We are not an emotional people from that perspective. We have to remember always that Canada is more than the sum of its individual parts. It is more than Manitoba, and it is more than Quebec. It is all of us working together to make this nation better for our children and our grandchildren.

So we are here today talking about a Constitution, and I go back to the courses that I took in constitutional history and constitutional law. I can hear Jim Acheson,

a professor at Dalhousie saying to me: Sharon, a Constitution has to be the most fundamental law of the nation; it has to be a living, breathing document. It must grow and mature as the nation grows and matures. It must evolve and it must always go forward and never go backward, and it must always have as its finite concern the rights of individuals.

We do not have a very normal constitutional process in Canada because while many of us would say that Canada's birthday is July 1 and we became a nation in 1867, that is not really historically accurate because in 1867 all we were given was control over our internal affairs. We still had to look to Great Britain for control of our external affairs, and we did not get that control until 1931 and the Statute of Westminster. To my way of thinking we did not really become a nation until we brought our Constitution home because how can you, as a Canadian, not be able to amend your own Constitution. Yet, until 1982 we could not amend our own Constitution, and it has taken a long time for those symbols of nationalism to become a part of the Canadian heritage.

My daughter Jenny who is 17 finds it difficult to believe that we did not always have the flag that is sitting to your right, Mr. Speaker. I mean, she just assumes that is the Canadian flag and it was always the Canadian flag, but those of us know that it did not become the Canadian flag until 1965. We did not have a national anthem until much later than that, and we did not bring our Constitution home until 1982. So our Constitution has evolved somewhat in an uneasy fashion and events have played an important part in that development of our Constitution. We found ourselves in 1982 presented with a brand new Constitution, the Canada Act, we called it. Enshrined in that Canada Act was a piece of legislation which to me was more critical than any other set of words within that document. It was referred to as the Canadian Charter.

You know the Bill of Rights in the United States became part of their Constitution 10 years after that country became a nation. Well, it took well over a hundred years before we could get a similar document in our Constitution. I think it is important today to remind ourselves of just what this document contains. What is the Charter? What does it mean? Because we talk about it and sometimes I think I am speaking Greek to those who do not want to listen, that it is a document of fundamental freedoms.

It says that we all should have freedom of conscience and religion, freedom of thought and belief and opinion and expression; that we should even have freedom of the press and other forms of communication; that we should have freedom of assembly and freedom of association; and that we should have democratic rights. The right to vote, the right to have an election, the right to have assemblies sit every year, and that we should have mobility rights, that Canadians should be free to live anywhere in the nation. We should have legal rights, and they should include the right to life, liberty and security of person and the protection from unreasonable seizure and, of course, the right of habeas corpus which first became a fundamental law in the British parliamentary system in 1215.

* (1530)

For me, the crowning glory of the Charter was the equality rights, and let me quote from the equality rights, Mr. Speaker. It says: "Every individual is equal before . . . the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability."

That of course brings us full circle to the very first amendment to the Constitution of Canada which we have referred to as the Meech Lake Accord. The Premier indicated that he had introduced the resolution in December of 1988 and withdrew it three days later. He knows that my fight began much earlier than that. When the document known as the Meech Lake Accord was brought back, first in April and later in June of 1987, I asked questions in the House, I made statements, and I made speeches indicating that I could not support the Meech Lake Accord as it was drafted at that particular time. I have even been known to have uttered the words that "Meech Lake is dead" which I did shortly after the April 1988 election campaign; but Meech Lake is like a cat, it has nine lives. It just keeps going on and on and on no matter what we say about it and no matter what arguments we put to reject it.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is clear that Manitobans spoke very eloquently about what they thought of the original Meech Lake Accord document. It was a rare privilege I think to participate in a task force with Members of the Opposition where this spirit of working together began. It began with Members of the Conservative Party, the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Doer) and my colleague from Fort Rouge to try and put together a document which would represent the expressions of Manitobans with respect to this first amendment to their Constitution.

For me, first and foremost was the need to protect Charter, this document which I thought was so fundamental to what we were as Canadians, what we are as Canadians. I have never been able to understand why the people of Quebec did not understand what we were talking about. I have to say to you that I do not think they did. When we spoke about the Charter we spoke about the fundamental equality rights of all Canadians, whether they were French speaking, whether they were English speaking, that we wanted all of their rights protected. We did not want any amendment to the Constitution—it did not matter what that amendment was—we did not want any amendment to our Constitution to infringe on those fundamental rights. If we allowed it to infringe on the fundamental rights of all Canadians, then we said some Canadians are more equal than other Canadians. That is absolutely unacceptable.

Then we framed—I do not think he has been given enough credit for it, but I will give the credit to the Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Carr), because in the task force debate he is the one who came up with the idea of naming it the Canada clause. We sat day after day after day and said, how can we put together a framework of Canada? He said we must call it a Canada clause. In this Canada clause we have to address a

number of issues. We have to address the issues that we are first and foremost Canadians and what that means in terms of our equality one with another.

The second thing that we have to do is to represent for the first time in our Constitution that our aboriginal peoples, who were here long before our so-called founding peoples, had simply not been included and that they had to be included and that they had to be recognized as a fundamental characteristic of Canada.

We also recognized, and it will come as no surprise to anyone that Manitoba should recognize it because of the multicultural dynamic of this particular province, that the multicultural peoples also had to be recognized as an essential dynamic in our nation. We never could understand, or at least I never could understand and I still cannot understand, why Quebec thinks that is somehow in conflict with my understanding and my respect for them as a distinct society in this nation. There is no question that they are distinct. In 1774 in the Quebec Act we recognized long before Confederation—1774—we recognized that they had a language and that they had a religion and that they had a culture and that they had a code of laws that was as fundamental to them as was our English common law, as was our British tradition and culture.

We have gone beyond that now, Mr. Speaker. We have to recognize that this whole nation changed beginning in 1890, that new peoples came to this nation, that new peoples settled in this country and they chose to make their heritage our heritage. They have contributed to that sense of ourselves as Canadians.

We also said that there were other documents within the Meech Lake Accord that we felt were not fair and were not equitable. The Meech Lake Accord, Mr. Speaker, as designed by the 11 First Ministers has a great many flaws, a great many flaws. It is a decentralizing document; it says that there should be more power given to provinces and less power given to the federal Government. I simply do not believe in that kind of concept for our nation. Canada is to a very great degree an accident in geography. If we do not have a strong national Government that can mandate and orchestrate programs that will treat all Canadians equally, then we will be less Canadian and we will become more Manitoban and more Quebecois and more Nova Scotian. That is not the direction that I want to see.

There are other aspects of the Meech Lake Accord that quite frankly never found its way into the task force report that I found offensive and difficult. I do not like the idea of having 10 immigration policies in this nation, and that is what I think we will have as a result of the Meech Lake Accord.

* (1540)

I do not believe that the provinces should be making appointments to the Supreme Court or to the Senate, but what we could never convince those who believed we were wrong in our task force approach was that we made compromises. Those of us who sat on that task force report made compromises. We came up with a bottom line of what we thought were those things

most fundamental to the people of Manitoba, those things that required more change than the other things, which we still believed needed change but we were so cognizant of saying "no" to Quebec about so many things that we said no, no, no, no we cannot add that to the list because we do not want to offend them, we do not want them to feel that they are not a part of this nation.

I remember the Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) in particular stressing that we had to be so conscious all the time of the message that we were giving to the people of Quebec as well as to the people of the rest of the nation. We compromised over and over and over again. We bottom-lined over and over and over again about what was fundamental to the people of this province.

The Meech Lake Accord in its original form to me was a rights-threatening document. It still is in many respects. So we went to Ottawa, and we took our Meech Lake Task Force Report, which we believed truly represented the views of Manitobans. I have to say we took it with pride, because we were the only process that had been conducted in that fashion, we were the only ones who set aside partisanship and worked together to hammer out this agreement, and so clutched in our hands we took the Manitoba Task Force Report.

I do not think that any of us expected the negotiations to be easy. What I do not think we expected was an absolute iron curtain to debate and reasonableness, but that is what we were approached with. That is what we found in the lack of willingness of others to dialogue with us. We came back with a new document, the Meech Lake Accord and a companion resolution.

I think it is important for you to know today why I agreed with the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and with the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Doer) that we should bring it back subject to the public hearing process in Manitoba and with our recommendation to our caucuses. Why after all those years of agonizing, after all those years of study, did we agree to bring it home? For the last 10 days we have all been told how much we caved in, how much we sacrificed our principles, how much we gave in to others and not our own fundamental beliefs. I think we have to set this on a stage and we have to look at it from that stage.

We were dealing with a perception. If it was not the truth, we will soon find out, but we were dealing with a perception. We heard it over and over and over again that if you do not sign the Meech Lake Accord Quebec will leave. Quebec will leave Confederation, and you Manitoba, and you Newfoundland, will be blamed.

I do not know what Quebec is going to do and neither does anybody else. They will make their minds up in their own time and in their own way. I am afraid we will have little to contribute to the debate, because it will be decided within their geographical boundaries, but what I did learn when I was in Ottawa was that the Prime Minister of this nation who should have been preaching calm, who should have been preaching a sense of Canadianism, was out in the front lines stirring up the fear. He is the biggest fear-monger of them all, and he frightens Canadians, Mr. Speaker. He frightened them badly.

It did not take many discussions with the people around the press barricades outside to realize that common folk, ordinary Canadians—and I hate that word, but for lack of a better word—those who are not, if you will, participants in the active political process, those who go off every day and earn their living and go out—at least the majority of them—and vote, those Canadians were frightened. They believed in this nation, and they did not want it to break up. They had been convinced that somehow or other it was Manitoba's fault and Newfoundland's fault.

There were others at those barricades who rejected that. That is quite true that even those individuals who were not prepared to ascribe blame to anyone were still frightened about what was going to happen in this nation. That was no small part in why I decided that we had to bring that home and share those fears expressed to us with others in our province.

I also agree with the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) that we did the best that we could. When you are up against an insurmountable obstacle, any change, any movement, has to be considered progress, and that is what we were up against. I believe that it is safe to say that we did change things, that we did put into place a new process for Senate reform. Whether it works remains to be seen. Mr. Speaker, I do not have a crystal ball. I do not know whether the others are going to act in good faith. I do not know whether they can be trusted, but there comes a point where you have to say, am I trustworthy? Can I give my word, and is my word my bond, and must I therefore respect that others when they give their word also consider it to be their bond?

We did achieve progress on the Canada clause. I know that our aboriginal peoples feel that that progress is not adequate enough. I can understand that, because they have been told to wait yet again, and they are tired of waiting. They who have waited so long certainly deserve to be tired of waiting, and because I cannot again bring out that crystal ball and say it is going to happen, I cannot give them that guarantee that that is going to happen, but I can say that it is more likely to happen as a result of what we did in Ottawa than what existed before.

Do I feel that we received Charter protection because they are prepared to put Section 28 and Section 16? No, Mr. Speaker, I do not think that is adequate Charter protection at all, not at all, and I will not be satisfied until every single section of the Charter is fundamentally protected and absolutely protected. But in order to get those protections in the future there has to be a table, and there has to be a process, and there have to be First Ministers conferences, and there has to be a nation.

I cannot get those promises now because they will not give them to me and I do not know why they will not give them to me, but they will not and they will not give them to you, and they will not give them to the people of this province, and they will not give them to Newfoundland. I agonize over that and say, should they, and the answer is yes, but would they, and the answer is no. So I have to live to fight another day in the hopes that we can get that recognition in the future, and we

have to get rid of the entire process of constitutional reform in this nation as it has existed.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I do not have a great deal of faith in the Prime Minister of our nation, and I do not think anybody in this Chamber does. But I think it is important to quote his own words at him so we can realize how little trust we should have in this man. In 1983 he said, about constitutional conferences, quote: The debate would be entirely open to the public at all times, there would be no sessions behind closed doors, Canadians could see and judge those who have been elected to serve them and determine if, in the interest of a more generous country, they have really answered an urgent and irresistible call to grandeur. He went on to say: Debate among proud men and women, properly motivated and inspired, can produce a consensus, imperfect by definition, but freely arrived at, and hence more comfortably accepted and adhered to by those on whose behalf it was brought into being.

An Honourable Member: I knew there was a reason why I voted for him.

Mrs. Carstairs: Well, let us go on to listen and you will really learn why you voted for him: So let us have this final constitutional forum in Ottawa in the hope that a favourable consensus will be referred back to the House for ultimate resolution. By so doing the federal Parliament will have gone the extra mile to ensure that, to the extent humanly possible, everyone was heard, all opinions were considered, all objections were entertained and the honourable compromise found reasonable reflection in the final document.

* (1550)

Well, that is what he said, Mr. Speaker, in 1983, and this is what he said last week: Anything that happens, it will, is going to be killed with kindness in the future, says our Prime Minister. You will not be able to get me to ever cut off debate on a constitutional resolution; they can go on for as long as they want, years. I want to hear from everybody, I want them recorded, I want them filmed, I want documents, and if I have missed anybody, I am going to reopen it. Then when it is done, then we are going to take it and we are going to pass it, which means that other people are going to have to do the work. The country will be better off; the process will be better off; the politicians will have a lot less to say, which is what should happen, and it will be better for Canada because it will be close to the people.

Well, Mr. Speaker, with the greatest respect to the man who occupies the second highest office, because fortunately a man of honour occupies the highest office, in the Governor General, we cannot trust this man. It is not Brian Mulroney we are voting for on this issue. We have to put him aside for the moment, with all his lack of scruples and integrity, and we have to deal with our nation. We have to listen to our voices, the voices of the Manitoba people, because that is what our process is all about, and as our First Minister has said, they will not be curtailed. They will not be left unlistened to.

Mr. Speaker, it is safe to say that I am no happier with the Meech Lake Accord today than I was in 1987. I believe the companion accord makes progress in the right direction but it does not go nearly as far as I would like it to go. I brought it home, and I brought it home because, like the Premier, I too went to the precipice. I too looked over and I could not see anything but a void. I could not see what the future held in store. I could not forecast what the events were going to be after the 24th of June. I knew however that Manitoba that has been tarred in the past would be tarred in the future if we somehow did not find accommodation, if we somehow did not reach out a hand.

Trust is a difficult thing. It is difficult for each and every one of us, particularly when we have been betrayed, particularly when we have not been considered and given due consideration, particularly when we do not believe that there is honour among the thieves, but we must trust because in not trusting we show our inadequacy to love our nation. That is what it is all about. It is love for Canada. It is saying yes to Canada. It is saying yes to the future. It is saying yes to our being part of that future.

I want the public of Manitoba to speak as eloquently as they can, but I want them to realize that this is not a French-English issue; this is not a Quebec-Manitoba issue. This is a Canada issue, and I will say yes to Canada.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition):

It is indeed an honour to rise on this very important occasion in this Legislature. We often rise one, two, three on Speeches from the Throne, budget debates and all kinds of other matters. It is very rare that all three Party Leaders throw away Party politics and try to speak on behalf of Manitobans and try to speak with one voice on the decisions we have to make. So it is a very rare occasion for me, who loves partisan politics quite frankly, to join in this very important debate with respect and admiration for my two colleagues and respect and admiration for the tough decision all MLAs have to make in this House.

I too am rising to support the motion before us and the process before us, the proposed constitutional amendment and the subsequent resolution that will come as the "add-on resolutions" and the process that we are just beginning in this Legislature in terms of the debate in the Legislature, the public hearing process that is scheduled next and ultimately a vote and decision democratically arrived and democratically decided by democratically elected Members of this Legislature from all parts of Manitoba and quite frankly from all walks of life.

I will be supporting the constitutional amendment, the four proposed add-on amendments and the two future processes that were signed in the communique by the First Ministers. Probably the happiest person that I am doing that, Mr. Speaker, I should say is Howard Pawley, my predecessor, who of course has had a difficult time with this issue, as all New Democrats have in Canada, on discussing this issue in terms of our vision and how this constitutional proposals fits.

This is a very, very tough decision. Every Member of this Legislature will have to make that decision. There

is no right or wrong decision on voting for these proposals. There is no more principled or less principled position. You really have to make a decision, as the two speakers before me have indicated, on a constitutional proposal, on additions and future processes that are far short of the expectations Manitoba raised in our task force report and do have flaws both in terms of substance and vision versus the consequences of constitutional harmony in this country, versus a constitutional crisis and disunity. That is a very, very tough decision.

There are some people that argue that this will make absolutely no difference to the people of Canada and the people of Quebec and therefore you should not vote for a flawed document. I respect their position. There are others that argue that this will make a major difference for our country. It will help the people in Quebec fight for a stronger, more united Canada. It will help the federalist side, and it may make the difference in the next 10 years between keeping a Canada as we know it and having a Canada disintegrate in potential parts and factions, whatever term they use. That is a very, very tough decision to make and I know that Members in this Legislature will come to that decision in different ways and they will make different decisions about that tough decision. Certainly Members in our Party across this country have taken different decisions on this very important issue and have used their judgment differently than I have. I respect their right to do it and I respect their right to stand up for their conscience and represent the vision that they see.

* (1600)

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, Meech Lake is tough for people in Manitoba, because in two very fundamental ways the Meech Lake proposal, the companion resolutions and companion amendments are in conflict with the vision and values in Manitoba. There is no question about that. Manitoba, even as long ago as the early '80s and for centuries I believe, has had a different vision of the country and of the fabric and values of this country than just the two founding nations. We have seen that argument and that part of that debate take place in many other debates in the history of this Legislature. We have seen that debate take place for years and decades with the conflict of the vision of the two founding nations versus the conflict of visions that I believe most of us hold in this province and in this Chamber.

We believe that the founding nations of Canada are not the only characteristics of Canada, Mr. Speaker. We believe that the founding characteristics of our country start with the first peoples of Canada, our aboriginal people, and that the first and most fundamental characteristic of our country and our province should be Canada's first people, something that was lacking in the original Meech Lake document and something that is lacking today and should not lack many years into the future in terms of real recognition of the fundamental characteristics of Canada in terms of our vision and our values.

The second vision, Mr. Speaker, is incorporated in Meech Lake with the two founding nations, but there

is another vision of Canada, an additional value and a different additional characteristic. That is the vision that we are now a multicultural province. We have multiracial, multicultural groups within our country and within our province. That too should be recognized as a fundamental characteristic of Canada. That is why when we are in this debate, and we are talking improvements, amendments and additions, it is still a conflict between the fundamental values of our province. There is no question about that.

There is a second conflict with our visions, and again it is something that runs through our province for decades again. The second major conflict with Meech Lake is the conflict and the vision that Manitobans have again of all political Parties of a strong central Government, a strong federal Government, Mr. Speaker. That is one which I personally have. It is one of the things that concerns me a great deal, that we have always believed in a strong central Government.

When we are looking at the Quebec proposals, many of which were just for the Province of Quebec initially, when you look at the 85 proposals and see the way they were incorporated, where many of them balkanize in some ways our country in many other areas to achieve those proposals of Quebec, there is no question, there can be no question that there is some erosion of the federal power in Meech Lake.

You know you have to look at what happened in the late '30s when the debates took place in this country between totally decentralized provinces and franchised provinces. That debate was being led by Ontario then. Other provinces such as Alberta were calling for some assistance in the West for the plight of the farmers and the plight of people in western Canada that were affected by the Dirty Thirties. It was Manitoba that was the bridge between those two visions, in the Rowell-Sirois debate, to call upon a balance between provinces having all the wealth and power because of their position in their country concentrated with their population and the vision that says we should redistribute wealth through different programs, that economic, social and other federal institutions and vehicles should be used. Clearly Meech Lake is at variance from those values. There is no question about that, Mr. Speaker.

That of course places us in a very, very tough dilemma in terms of these issues. Do we today, because we could not get the Canada clause which is our vision, do we today because it requires unanimous consent walk away and try to get 7/50 to get the Canada clause and the vision that we believe in a future constitutional round which is scheduled to start in July, or do we today deal with the issues of a strong central Government by potentially saying no to a constitutional agreement and potentially placing more pressure on our strong central government and having potential disunity? What will that mean for a strong central Government when you look at the potential of a fundamental change in the constitutional arrangement of our citizens in the country? It also would change in the way in which Governments operate in this country with one-quarter of our population in this country. What will that mean? With all my fears about the Constitution and Meech Lake, what will the changing relationship

of one-quarter of our population mean to a strong central Government?

I have not just talked to the people of Quebec about this issue. I have also talked to the people of Atlantic Canada, some of whom feel the same way I do about Meech Lake. I have talked to Alexa McDonough who has worked in social services all her life and now is the Leader of the Party in Nova Scotia. She is very, very worried about the spending power provisions and the balkanization provisions of Meech Lake. When she looks at that in a pure way she says to me, this is not our vision as social democrats of a country and as a value system that redistributes wealth from the have provinces to the people that need the opportunity through that redistribution. When she also asks the question, what are you going to do if we potentially lose 25 percent of the population, and what is that going to mean for Atlantic Canada and the citizens of Atlantic Canada, she comes to the same conclusions that some of us have to come to, that it is better to proceed with constitutional peace and the opportunity to have peace in our country. There is no guarantee, but the opportunity to have those kind of reconciliations that are so badly needed in our country rather than have a constitutional failure. Tough decisions, nobody has the right answer.

Mr. Speaker, this is all taking place, this debate is taking place, those two clashes of visions and values are all taking place in a country that is seeing daily the undermining of the value system that made Canada a different place to live than United States. We have seen a period of time that I believe has been Darwinian, more the survival of the fittest kind of value system, in decision after decision from Governments and corporations that makes it harder and tougher for people to have the kind of tolerance and respect that has always been a hallmark of Canada and the values that make us different. We share a North American continent, but we have always developed our institutions and our values in a different way, and I believe in a more humane way, as a value of our country and our great country Canada.

All this is taking place. The Premier (Mr. Filmon) talked about the kind of environment, and the Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) talked about the type of environment that we are dealing with. We are dealing with these issues in a very charged and emotional environment, Mr. Speaker. We are dealing with these issues in a value system that I do not support, and a value system that we must change in the 1990s. You can talk about words in a Constitution, but I happen to believe that the values in this country in the 1990s are what we have to work on next, not the words in a document, not the words in a constitutional proposal but the kind of attitude that we as Canadians have towards each other is the key challenge for us in the 1990s, not endless rounds of constitutional wrangling, endless rounds of bickering, and endless rounds of Canadians fighting Canadians.

* (1610)

Mr. Speaker, this environment was most notable in the way we have dealt with our constitutional process.

I know the other two Leaders have spoken on this issue, but I just want to speak for a few minutes about the process that took place and the contrast of that process between Manitoba and the federal-provincial system of a couple of weeks ago. There is no question it is a tale of two processes that have taken place in this country. There is one process that called for an open public debate and public input into everything that would go into our constitutional proposal and public debate upon what we arrived at.

Now that did not mean to say, Mr. Speaker, that we did not have private meetings. We used three Parties, did not retreat, but we met in private to try to develop a consensus position, but that is in total contrast, the public input and the public debate is in total contrast to what has taken place at Meech Lake, at Langevin, and again at the Congress Centre in Ottawa, and in the intervening years and months that took place with the public process before Charest. We should look at what happened in Ottawa and how we arrived at the initial parts of this constitutional crisis.

I know as a Member of our caucus, a month after the First Ministers failed on aboriginal self-government issues, something that we felt very strongly about as a Government, and Members of our Cabinet, Elijah Harper with Howard Pawley, worked very hard to achieve and were unsuccessful because of the 7/50 formula at Ottawa and it was not just Quebec that had said no. It was a number of other western provinces that had said no to some legitimate proposals.

Five weeks later we were told that, in caucus, there was going to be a meeting on the Constitution again and we were told, as I recall, there would not be any conclusion. It is just a dinner meeting. There are no proposals on the table; there is not going to be anything happening. All of a sudden, lo and behold, there was a constitutional proposal called Meech Lake and then we were told it would be a miracle and there would not be any changes made.

We finally had a go at it in our own Caucus and the public finally had a chance to see it before the Langevin block. There were a number of changes made at Langevin after we were told that there could not be any changes at Langevin. That came out of the Langevin meeting, Mr. Speaker, and there were some comments about having public hearings across the country again about this Langevin proposal.

There was some indication publicly at that point that there would be a public hearing process in June of 1987, but days after that document was signed we were told that this is a seamless sweater that cannot have any word change, and this is a document that cannot have one "i" changed or one "t" changed or not one comma changed in terms of the proposal at Langevin.

The Government then chose to take that document and not even have public hearings across the country. I know that Lorne Nystrom and Pauline Jewett moved a motion to have the public hearings outside of Ottawa and were defeated by the Prime Minister-ordered committee to only restrict the debate in Ottawa.

Of course, months and months went by and everywhere there was a public hearing process, Ontario,

New Brunswick and Manitoba. There were a number of recommendations that came forward that have very similar visions to the one that we had in Manitoba, visions that said, expand the Canada clause to include Canada's first peoples, visions that said, expand the distinct society clause to include other groups of Canadians as a characteristic of Canada and that came out of the Ontario report in 1988.

Quite frankly, it did not come out of Manitoba to start with, it came out of the first set of public hearings. It came from the public of Canada when they first had a chance to look at it. A similar vision came out in New Brunswick when they finally had a set of public hearings. Mr. Speaker, it came out again loud and clear in the Manitoba task force report. I know that many, many Manitobans, the majority of Manitobans said, yes, we can accept that Quebec is a distinct society in Canada, but put in Canada's first peoples. They are the first of the distinct society in Canada. They should be recognized as the first characteristic of Canada. Also many people again put in the multicultural mosaic of this country in the task force report that we had.

Mr. Speaker, there were a number of other recommendations we made in the Manitoba task force report, many of which have been articulated by the other two Leaders that I will not repeat, but that kind of vision has been the vision of Canadians wherever there has been public hearings.

Of course, it is absolutely criminal that we went from the First Ministers' meeting in November of 1989, November 9 and 10, I remember, without any conclusion to the constitutional impasse, and the Prime Minister of this country waited until the end of April to create the first public parliamentary committee to go across the country and to finally hear the views of Canadians. The Prime Minister chose to wait 33 and a half months before he created the opportunity for Canadians to speak out. If this deal goes down, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister should resign in shame by leaving it so late for the people.

Mr. Speaker, we finally received in an all-Party way recommendations called the Charest Report which were tabled in the House of Commons on May 18. What a tremendous vindication to the people of Manitoba when they came out with the same vision we came out with in terms of having other people in Canada considered as characteristics of our country, and not in the preamble, but in the body of the Constitution where the Quebec distinct society clause is. We were not 100 percent satisfied but very joyful on May 18, Mr. Speaker, when that report was finally tabled in the House of Commons, and a report that also said that the recommendations for amendments should be incorporated at a First Ministers' meeting, but it should be done so forthwith so the issue of certainty could be dealt with by the First Ministers. It also applauded the Manitoba public hearing process in terms of constitutional proposals.

Mr. Speaker, the question has to be asked and the question has to be answered by one person. Why did the Prime Minister of this country wait three and a half weeks? Why did the Prime Minister of this country back away from Charest? Why did the Prime Minister of this

country back away from an all-Party report signed by 18 M.P.s from all provinces of Canada including the Province of Quebec? Why did he back away from that?

Is Lucien Bouchard the only reason why First Ministers should deal with the Constitution? Was his resignation the only reason why aboriginal people could not be considered in the fundamental characteristics of Canada as we had proposed? Why did the Prime Minister wait day after day after day to call the First Ministers' meeting to get these proposals on the table and to get these resolutions forward before the people of Canada?

Mr. Speaker, we wasted three and a half valuable weeks. We wasted three and a half valuable weeks while the Prime Minister of Canada left this constitutional impasse twisting in the wind, and those three and a half weeks I am afraid will go down in history as the key three and a half weeks in terms of the process in Manitoba.

Of course, then we saw what the Prime Minister said last week. If it was not so serious, it reminded me of something you would talk about at 10 years old in a locker room about how he did this and he did that and he counted backwards. He counted backwards from the June 23 deadline. He counted backwards to the day that he wanted to roll the dice. Well, he rolled the dice of Canada. He has no right to roll the dice of Canada, and he should do the right thing on June 24 if we are not able to conclude this debate in this province.

Mr. Speaker, we have come full circle—a closed process in Ottawa, an open process in Manitoba. I want to talk a little bit about the closed process again in Ottawa. Yes, it was tough. The Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) and I had too many media interviews because the First Ministers did not come out. It is almost like Andy Warhol. You know, your 15 minutes of infamy, I guess one would say. It was so funny sometimes; I would stand there and say, I know nothing. I did not know what was going on exactly, but that was the kind of scenario. I have often thought—and I mentioned it once to the First Minister and Clyde Wells—that the First Ministers, when they reached an impasse on Friday, my suggestion was why do you not just go out in the conference room and sit around the table, and even without the other First Ministers, and start the public process, when we were worried that the Prime Minister would table the document. Just a strategic consideration, but it would have been rather interesting. At that point I was afraid that the old take it or leave it would happen on Friday at five, it happened on Friday about seven-thirty.

You know, just to show you what was happening the aboriginal leadership of this country were across the street at a hotel. We would try to tell them what we knew or did not know every night. Canada's first people across the street at a hotel, it is a national disgrace, Mr. Speaker. I can understand the passion, the feelings, the conscience of aboriginal leadership right across this country in their support for my good friend, Elijah Harper, and his struggle to again demonstrate to Canadians that Canada's first peoples will not be treated that way ever, ever, ever again in the Constitution of this country.

Mr. Speaker, we did achieve a few things. We did achieve five amendments. Some people argue where is the certainty? Well, you cannot have certainty unless Premiers can sign Constitutions to amend. It has to go back to Legislatures.

* (1620)

I happen to feel fairly comfortable that some of those changes that we and the First Minister agreed to will be amendments to the Constitution. The sexual equality clause is better than what is there in Meech Lake now for Canadian women. It was the first proposal made by NAC in 1987. It was a proposal in an amendment the New Democratic Party and the Liberal Party I believe moved in the House of Commons in 1987. It was not our goal of the Charter of Rights; it was not our goal of the Charter of Rights override.

We were able to get an aboriginal process again started with aboriginal participation over the next three years, Mr. Speaker. There is no question that all of us felt totally inadequate trying to represent aboriginal rights and aboriginal issues as white people in delegations that have no understanding and no feeling for the real concerns and issues that aboriginal first peoples must represent themselves.

We were able to get some changes for the Yukon and Northwest Territories. My good friend, Tony Penikett, was happy with those proposals. He now is being accused in the Yukon of selling out. It goes with the territory I suppose, Mr. Speaker.

He does not like that, but it is part and parcel of coming back with something that is not meeting all your expectations. I happen to believe, and he believes, that you can receive and work for the federal Government amendment by unanimous consent rather than going back to 7/50, which he felt would be such an impediment to becoming a province anyway, after it was proposed in 1982, that they could live with some of the commitments in that document. The debate rages on in the Yukon and Northwest Territories as it does in Manitoba.

There is also a separate amendment on the duality clause, Mr. Speaker. There are separate amendments for allowing judges and senators to be nominated from people of the Yukon and Northwest Territories. More importantly, there are a couple of future public processes that will be helpful, I believe, to the vision of Manitoba. I believe it will be easier.

Having been at just one meeting with the Premier of Manitoba (Mr. Filmon) and the Leader of the Liberal Party (Mrs. Carstairs) with Clyde Wells and Robert Bourassa, I believe it will be easier to get the Canada clause under 7/50, but I understand that is an argument of logic. It plays no part with people and the passion of their feelings that have been told next time, next time, next time, and totally disagree with the decision we make. I understand that completely.

Mr. Speaker, we will have a discussion on Senate reform. Now we will have a very good partisan battle, I assure you, on Senate reform, because we are not in favour of the Americanization of the Senate. I will

not mention which other Parties are, because this is a non-partisan debate, but we do not support the Americanization of our Senate.

You might note in the document that the Premier signed there is a little clause there that says: that respects the role and responsibility of parliament, something I believe in, Mr. Speaker, and maybe we New Democrats will be talking about a different kind of Senate reform in the public hearing process. Maybe we need a different type of equity, not the equity of provinces. Maybe we need equity of women in the Senate; maybe we need equity of aboriginal people in the Senate; maybe we need some equity in the multicultural community in the Senate. Maybe we should be looking at a different term of equity than we have had before. I think it is going to be a great debate because the NDP have been the original Senate reformers. We wanted to abolish the Senate for years as an alternative to the patronage appointments that have taken place, but I am happy that we will be having a public process on that issue.

Mr. Speaker, the spending power provisions which I feel strongly about, and some of my colleagues feel strongly about, are still in Meech Lake the way it is. I have had good people argue with me that that is better for spending power than what was in the Constitution before. There are people who believe it is better for our province to have it finally entrenched in the Constitution. I do not like the opting out provisions; I do not like the balkanization. We did compromise on that proposal by proposing to delete the terms because we could not agree on minimum standards, and that was one of the non-partisan disagreements we had in our committee.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on about the proposal that we are bringing back to our province, but I would like to say that this was a very difficult decision. It is something we knew we would have to make all along. We all knew that it would come to some point sometime at the First Ministers' meeting where we would have to say yes or no to a proposal that was being developed at the First Ministers' meeting. We knew all along there would be that point of reckoning. We knew all along that point of reckoning could be the only point of the public debate that would take place chaired by the Prime Minister, and that point came on Friday night. That was the day after we got accused of wrecking the country for about the third time that week, and we had to make a decision.

Mr. Speaker, and Members of this Assembly, it was a tough decision. It was a decision that we knew would probably be politically unpopular in this province, and it has been. It was a decision that at the time we were making it the Premier of Newfoundland was going to go with the Senate proposals made from Ontario, and that Manitoba had to make a decision at that point in time to be outside or inside the signatures by the First Ministers at the First Ministers' meeting. We had a very good heart-to-heart talk, the three of us—all hunched over our chairs, I might add—about what the options were, and we knew that we had achieved some things. We knew we had achieved some things, particularly for the future, that would be more important for Manitoba

than, quite frankly, the document and the five additional amendments, and we had to make a decision what was best for Manitoba and what was best for Canada.

I happen to believe that it was the best decision for the people of Manitoba and the people of Canada. I respect the position my colleague from Rupertsland has taken. It is not the best interests of aboriginal people and therefore not for Canadians, and he will dissent with all his conscience and all his might. I believe it will make a difference for the people of Quebec, not the Government of Quebec, not the functionaries, but it will make a difference for the people of Quebec on fighting for the federalist side in this country. I therefore believe it will make a difference for our country and I believe that this decision has to be weighed on that basis. It is a judgment call, Mr. Speaker. It is a very tough judgment call.

If you believe that this decision does not make any difference to the Province of Quebec, you may come to a different conclusion, and Members of our caucus have come to a different conclusion than I have, but if you believe that this will make a difference to the people of Quebec, if you believe it will make a difference for constitutional harmony, if you believe it will make a difference for some of us that want to get on to other issues in our economy and the value systems of our country, then you have to come to the same conclusion that we came to.

Yes, we will have public hearings, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we will have a very, very vigorous debate, but I believe that this is in the best interest of Canada. Therefore, because it is in the best interest of Canada I believe it is in the best interest of the Manitoba public. I therefore am going to keep my word that I made Friday night to our Premier (Mr. Filmon) and support this resolution and fight another day for all those issues that are absolutely essential. It will continue to be my first objective to achieve the fundamental rights and privileges and necessities for aboriginal people, because I feel so strongly that they were so totally left out of this constitutional process and totally inadequate in terms of our constitutional package. So I will be supporting this proposal, Mr. Speaker, and I will be listening to Manitobans.

I thank you all for the time and energy you have put in, and I really look forward to the discussion and debate from all of the MLAs. Thank you very much.

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, I rise today with very mixed feelings to speak on this, one of the most important issues I will ever speak on in this House or at any other assembly. It is a very difficult decision because of the apparent reasons, because of my ethnic background, because of my color and because of so many things that happened to the ethnic minority in this country in the past. Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of expectations from me to make a right decision. I do not know at this time what the right decision is.

Let me go back to my background. I came to this country in 1979. I belong to a group which not only has suffered in their own homeland, but they have

suffered in this country as well. The example was given by my Leader that in 1904 a ship came. That ship was turned back because of the apparent reason that we did not have the Charter of Rights. We did not have the equal protection of rights. I do not ever want any ship from any community to go back. I want us to be equally treated. This document will go some way to help that situation, but it is not yet complete.

Mr. Speaker, Canada is a haven for people who are running away from persecution, running away from all sorts of harassment, all sorts of difficulties. This is the place where people come with a great hope, but what we have seen for the last three years and for the last seven days especially is that that hope has been eroded by the Prime Minister of this country. This Prime Minister in the name of democracy has tried his best to abuse democracy in his own way. That is no secret to any one of us.

* (1630)

In my constituency we have people from all ethnic regions, almost from all parts of the world. They all have different views on this Constitution, this specific document. I will go with the majority of their opinion but, Mr. Speaker, let me start with saying that we have heard that the Constitution belongs to the people of Canada and not the First Ministers of this nation and above all not to this Prime Minister, who has no respect for democracy.

Mr. Speaker, he has not only failed as a Leader, but he has failed as an individual citizen of this great nation to give a direction in a very difficult time. He has rather led us to a path of destruction.

Mr. Speaker, we are in the middle of this constitutional crisis. This is not created by the people of Manitoba. It is not created by the people of Canada, it is created by this Prime Minister.

We all have a different vision of this country, but with the one common goal to have equality for all people. It does not matter what background they come from. It does not matter in which province they live. It does not matter which language they speak. That is what people wanted, but this Government does not go far enough to protect those rights yet.

Mr. Speaker, I saw the Member for Rupertsland (Mr. Harper) getting up in this House. That was one of my proudest moments, to see him rise for his own right, because how can I even ask for my rights as a new Canadian if the people who are the original owners of this country do not have rights? They were not at the table.

Mr. Speaker, I have seen the conditions of the Native people in this country. I have seen in the Pine Falls area, the Fort Alexander area, it is deplorable. It is a shame that a country such as Canada, which is so prosperous, the original owners of this country do not have equal rights, do not have an equal standard of living. The reasons are because they do not have equal participation. Nobody should tolerate that, that any constitutional amendments in the future should be made without their participation.

Mr. Speaker, the emotional scars given by this process and this Prime Minister will take a long, long time to heal. Before I go further, I must admire the courage of our Premier (Mr. Filmon), my Leader (Mrs. Carstairs) and the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Doer), the way they have conducted the business of this nation in the most decent and most honest way. That is why they are suffering and this Prime Minister, who has no ethics, is laughing. He will laugh on the 24th. If he is a man who has any character, he should resign on the 24th of June.

Mr. Speaker, how can you make a constitution with closed doors, seven days of meetings, with only one tactic, and telling the people of Manitoba that they do not like Canada, telling people of Manitoba that they are racist. I am a prime example. This Manitoba is more tolerant than any one in Canada, because they elected a minority member in my constituency. We do not need any other thing to prove to them. We are very tolerant. Saying good for Canada does not mean that we are saying no for Quebec. Mr. Speaker, we must not forget, we should also say yes for Manitoba too.

Mr. Speaker, that is missing in many parts of this country. The media is to be blamed to some extent. The way my Leader, the Premier and the Leader of the New Democratic Party were dealt with is a shame, and I understand what they have gone through. For the last one week my caucus Members have gone through, it may not be the same process, but in some degree it is a painful process. We have helped each other and we are still talking to each other to come to a right decision. I personally will not know what is the right decision until we listen to the public. I listen to my constituents in detail. I talk to them in all forums, Mr. Speaker, but I am very disturbed that we have seen democracy being abused by one man and that is the Prime Minister of this country.

History will tell. People remember the good things and the good leaders of this nation. There are very few, but only bad people are remembered. There are very few, very rarely you remember bad people and this Prime Minister will be remembered for his bad events in this country. How can you be honest to the people of Canada when you have a Lucien Bouchard sitting in your Cabinet for three years, a proven person who wanted Quebec to separate? How can you keep him at the Cabinet Table? That showed the dishonesty from Day One.

Mr. Speaker, how can you build a Constitution? Talk to the people at the street level, what do they feel? I am not an expert, but they tell me simply that the Constitution belongs to the people. People must be consulted and the people of Manitoba should be proud of their consultation, their process. Because of our process in Manitoba, Canada is seeing some light in the right direction and credit is due to all the Parties in this House. Because once the Constitution is made it is going to take a long time to change and may never be changed. Governments can be changed—if Governments are not doing the right things to manage the affairs, but constitutions are very, very difficult to change and it takes generations and generations to prepare the right Constitution. We should never be

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afraid of saying, let us continue on the part of progressing, and make sure that one day we will make the right decision.

* (1640)

Mr. Speaker, it was a very proud moment for me to see my Leader along with the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Leader of the NDP (Mr. Doer). They were the only three people in the whole crowd there who spoke for multiculturalism. That was it, nobody else spoke. As I said earlier, how can I even ask for my rights when the rights of the original people of this country are being ignored?

Mr. Speaker, now we are left with very little choice, very little time. This Prime Minister was told on May 29 that we are running out of time, we need an extension, we need our process to be fully explored. The Prime Minister ignored the warning and now this Prime Minister is threatening again with a different voice. He sent a Senator who was never elected to any House in this country and he is telling us what to do, who are elected Members of this House, and change the rules for them? No, we should never change the rules for them. We should change the rules for the people of Manitoba and Canada, not for Senator Murray.

Mr. Speaker, the rest of Canada should learn their lesson from us and from our Leaders and the people of Manitoba, to proceed in the right direction. When I started I was telling you that there is a lot of expectation from me that I should object to this particular deal, and people have very valid reasons. There is one-third of Canadians who do not speak English or French; that is not their primary language. We are ignoring them too. Who is speaking for them? Only the people of Manitoba, and that is the right thing to do. The rights of minorities are not fully protected under the present agreement and with that companion resolution it may go, but it is not 100 percent yet, but we are on the right path.

Mr. Speaker, very little has been said about the immigration clause in the present agreement. It is very destructive, it is very disturbing to me personally. It will give special power to Quebec, not only give them more control of immigration policy, but they will have the right to choose, and they may abuse their power in terms of maybe they will want more educated people, or they may decide on the basis of race or ethnic background. That clause must be reviewed, and as has been outlined in the Manitoba report it should be reviewed every five years to make positive changes.

(Mr. William Chornopyski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me talk about the basic fundamental characteristics that have been talked a lot, about the distinct society clause. As a minority I have no objection saying Quebec is a distinct culture, but what about other groups? Are they not distinct? Every human being is distinct and must be treated that way, not on the basis of their cultural background. It should be on the basis of an individual person. That is why the Charter of Rights is very, very fundamental for me personally and a lot of other Canadians.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the immigration policy as I was going through it, the clause in Meech Lake would possibly lead to a questionable decision made on the basis of race or ethnic religion. That will have an impact on the future generations and I said must be changed. Giving the power to each and every other province, they may follow the same lines, but it is very fundamental that to protect the individual rights and the people of all ethnic backgrounds, that policy must be changed. If it cannot be changed right now, it seems like it must be reviewed at regular intervals.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the last week I have received numerous phone calls from my constituents. The reaction is very mixed. Some people are in favour of the accord, some people are against the accord. They have different visions. People in the same family have a different vision for Canada and different aspirations. Various cultural groups, including MIC, have spoken against the Meech Lake Accord because they think it does not go far enough to protect the individual rights.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I make my final decision I have to listen to my constituents and the public hearings which we are committed to. In making that decision I will always keep one thing in mind, that Canada is the most important thing and should come first, and then Manitoba, because if we do not have a Canada we do not have any rights for anyone. That decision should not be based on any threats of separation or a different implication, it should be based on the inner will that I want this thing for this country and that is the way it should be.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me explain a very simple thing. Cultures are not saved by legislation, cultures are saved by individuals and the families and the communities. No culture will survive if people are not strong. Let us not forget there are other cultures in this country other than French who have survived very well, people of Jewish faith, I feel so much sympathy for them, they have survived for so long without even a nation. That is a strong culture. That should tell us something, that we should never legislate a culture. Let people take responsibility for their own actions.

In closing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I am saying is that as a new Canadian, I have a responsibility not only to my fellow old Canadians but also for the future generation, for the minority groups, as well as for society at large.

That is why my decision is going to be very crucial for me personally. I will make the decision based on the explanation I have given already, but let not anybody make threats of any kind to have a Constitution. That Constitution will not survive, and that has been explained very eloquently by the Leaders and the Premier of Manitoba (Mr. Filmon), because you cannot bind people by threats. You bind people by concession, by compromise, by justice. Justice will be served only when the Charter of Rights is protected fully and our original people have been given their equal right at the table. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): I feel it is a privilege and an honour for me to be able to have an

opportunity to participate in this historic debate, this debate which has a bearing on future constitutional change in our great country.

I want to say firstly that I declare my opposition to a badly flawed and unacceptable document. In doing so I believe I speak for the overwhelming number of people who live in my constituency of Brandon East, and I believe my view reflects the majority view of the people of Manitoba.

One only needs to listen to the open-line programs, listen to the various surveys that have been done, do your own surveys. I know some individual MLAs have done their own surveys. The message is coming loud and clear from all over this province. Indeed, we are getting it from outside of the province, but only confining our assessment to the people in this province. The message is coming loud and clear that they do not wish to see the Meech Lake Accord pass as it now stands. They are not satisfied with it for all the reasons, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that were expressed during the task force hearings. People have not changed their position, and they are not satisfied with the package that our Leaders brought back from Ottawa.

I want to give my commendation to the Premier and the Leaders of the Liberal Party and New Democratic Party in this House for their efforts in Ottawa. They tried very hard, and I know they were under very difficult circumstances. I believe that the process, as many have reflected upon, in Ottawa was sad and was very disturbing to Canadians, certainly disturbing to myself and I know some of my colleagues.

Before I go on about that I want to say also congratulations to the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) for standing up and saying that we will not circumvent the rules of the House, the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Manitoba, that we will not circumvent the rules for Senator Lowell Murray, for the Prime Minister, for Mr. Bourassa or for anyone else who is saying we should do so.

* (1650)

The fact is we have our traditions in this House. We have procedures. They are very democratic. To try to circumvent them would be undemocratic and would be totally unacceptable to the people of this province.

Talking about undemocratic, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we witnessed a very undemocratic process in our capital city of Ottawa the past week or so when our Premier, along with the Premier of Newfoundland, Mr. Clyde Wells, were subject, from what I could see from watching the proceedings—that is outside of the proceedings—what we could see on the streets and the statements being made and the commentaries coming, they were subject to a great deal of bullying and a great deal of blackmail in my judgment in Ottawa.

We saw backroom political maneuvering. We saw pressure tactics. We saw media manipulation. The CBC, which I believe has been one of my favourite institutions in this country, has gone down considerably in my esteem, because I believe the CBC was manipulated, was used to put forward a particular point of view that

was not totally objective. I resent that as a person who is a taxpayer who helps to keep the CBC functioning. The CBC should act in an impartial manner. In this particular case, in my judgment, they were totally biased, and that is a discredit to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and it is a disservice to the people of Canada. So we had distortion coming out of the conference.

The other comment that has been made, and I agree the fact that the Prime Minister, Mr. Mulroney, left the holding of the conference to the 11th hour has been virtually an attempt to undermine the process in the Province of Manitoba. How could any of us accommodate the thousands of people who now want to be heard in the public hearings process and still abide by a very short timetable. Even if my colleague the Member for Rupertsland (Mr. Harper) had not been able to hold up the process in various ways, I would submit, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we would still not have had time to hear the people of Manitoba who definitely want to be heard, the people who have very strong views. My impression is people have stronger views on this subject than I maybe have heard in the last 20 years that I have been a Member of this House, where people are very, very anxious about this subject, very frustrated about this subject. They are very angry about this subject, and they say they believe that they have an accord they do not like that is in the process of being shoved down their throats. They do not like it and they do not want it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the fact is that I would like to make reference to some comments made by Professor Bryan Schwartz, who is a constitutional expert, a professor of law at the University of Manitoba who makes reference to the feelings of people about nationhood and about media manipulation that I have talked about and the psychological torture that went on in Ottawa.

If I could just quote from a paper he has written: ". . . people will feel that their sense of nationhood and their democratic rights have been betrayed. They will believe that intimidation, media manipulation, psychological torture, and executive fiat have prevailed. They will be convinced that nothing they say about anything matters for much. People participated in public hearings, overwhelmingly and cogently objected to Meech—and have been ignored again and again. People voted for politicians because they said they were against Meech, and have found their confidence betrayed again and again. The federal government has cheated the people of Manitoba out of the opportunity for fair public hearings, and the people of Newfoundland province out of a promised referendum."

Professor Schwartz puts it extremely well. The tactics of the First Minister, the Prime Minister of this country, to hold it to the 11th hour has cheated the people of Newfoundland and the people of Manitoba from having the time to once again express their views to their legislators.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say blackmail as well, because the basic premise on which our delegation came back from Ottawa and indeed shared by many other Premiers is that if the Meech Lake Accord is not approved the

Province of Quebec will leave the Canadian confederation. Well, I do not accept that notion for one moment. As a matter of fact, I have some figures here, some statistics from surveys done that will show you that the bulk of Canadians do not believe that. They simply do not accept the premise that the Meech Lake Accord will make any difference.

* (1655)

If Quebec wishes to move to a separate status—and I hope that is never the case, no one wants to see that—I believe it will go with or without the Meech Lake Accord. Therefore, I reject the thesis that we must sign this or Quebec leaves the country and we break up. I simply cannot accept that. I think anyone who thinks it through and reasons it through will come to that position. Indeed the surveys show that the bulk of the Canadian people have that view, but what we have had, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a process which was diminished down to the level of a crap game. The Prime Minister himself referred to rolling the dice virtually at the eleventh hour.

I believe this process is an outrage. Manitobans are disgusted with the Prime Minister over this, and unfortunately this statement and the fact that this was his tactic has caused people to have even greater distrust and contempt for politicians. I think that is sad.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say something also about my colleague, the Member for Rupertsland (Mr. Harper). Canadians are proud of the Member for Rupertsland. Manitobans are proud of the Member for Rupertsland, and I am proud of the Member for Rupertsland, my colleague.

I believe he spoke exceedingly well for the aboriginal people who have not been listened to, who have been cheated in so many ways, and who have had so many conferences in the past which were meaningless and led to nothing. He did an excellent job, and he is continuing to do that.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

We know also from the fantastic response that the Member for Rupertsland (Mr. Harper) has received from all across this country that there are hundreds of thousands of Canadians, if not millions of Canadians, grateful to him for the stand that he is taking.

He stood up not only on behalf of the aboriginals in effect, but he also stood up for multicultural groups as the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Cheema) referred to a moment ago. He stood up on behalf of the ethnic people, the various ethnic groups that we have in our country that have enriched our country and are enriching our country whose rights could be denied under this accord and who have concerns about the Meech Lake Accord.

He stood up and he spoke for the women of Manitoba and the women of Canada who are very, very concerned about the Charter of Rights being overridden by the distinct society clause.

We have a very active group in the Westman area, the Westman Women's Coalition with Paula Mallea and

many others, Gladys Worthington, and many other fine women who have spent virtually years on this subject and have done their very best to make their views known as to why they believe the Meech Lake process, the Meech Lake Accord, is bad for women, that ultimately it will take rights away from women.

So I say, when Elijah Harper—I am sorry—the MLA for Rupertsland, stood up and did what he did, he was fighting for the women of Canada, certainly for the women of Manitoba. He was fighting, Mr. Speaker, for the vast majority of the people of this province, for the average Manitoban who does not want to see this accord go through. He stood up for so many people.

I had an opportunity to speak to a couple of lawyers, Mr. Speaker, outside of the Chamber yesterday. They were standing up with a big sign saying no to the accord. They did not like the cave-in, add-on proposals, the companion proposals that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) came back with. They did not like the Meech Lake Accord. They told me they represented 150 lawyers, a group of 150 lawyers, who were definitely opposed to the Meech Lake Accord and could not see anything of any value in the companion resolution, so when Elijah Harper stood up, he did not use the rules to defeat the people, he used the rules to protect the people of Manitoba. He used the rules in my judgment to enhance the position of the majority of Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, I do not make those statements lightly. All the surveys, all the information, that are coming to us from radio stations, television stations, surveys that are being done by individual MLAs, indicate categorically that the vast majority, the overwhelming majority, of Manitobans are against passing of this accord.

CJOB, a very well-known important radio station, had an open-line program on the subject just a day ago, and there was not one single call that came in to oppose what the MLA for Rupertsland (Mr. Harper) is trying to do. There was not one single call that came in to say that they wanted this Legislature to pass the Meech Lake Accord, not one single call.—(interjection)—Right, right, you are right.

* (1700)

CKND, a local television station, is doing a survey. You pay your 50 cents and you phone in yes or no, one number or the other. I only saw the results from last night; I have not seen any results from today. So far 237 people have phoned in to say they are in favour of the Meech Lake Accord, but 3,064 phoned in to say they were definitely against the accord.

I did a very brief survey in Brandon; it is not over yet. We received 250 returns as of yesterday. I have received only one return which said they were in favour of passing the Meech Lake Accord; 249 said they were opposed. I would be the first one to admit that these are not sort of scientific sample surveys taking a cross section but, Mr. Speaker, when you get that overwhelming number on one side as opposed to another, there has to be a message there. There has to be a message for not only me as an MLA for Brandon East, but there is a message for everyone. There is a

message for every single MLA in this House, and I say, please, listen to the people.

Mr. Speaker, this Legislature does not really have enough time to give adequate consideration to these resolutions, particularly the companion package which just came back with the Premier (Mr. Filmon). We need time to analyze the so-called add-ons. The public needs time. There is no way that we can get through 3,000 briefs or whatever the number is now in the allotted time. I say that even though we were delayed through procedural techniques, as I mentioned before. With or without, we could not have gotten through the public hearings proposed.

Unfortunately, while I commended the Premier (Mr. Filmon) for saying he would not break the rules of the House, he did say last week that he would not listen to the hearings because he had made a commitment in Ottawa. I appreciate the fact that he made that commitment to the other Premiers and the Prime Minister, but he said regardless of the hearings he would not change his position.

Well, that disturbs me, particularly when he will not agree to a free vote. If he had agreed to a free vote on the part of the Conservative Caucus, there would be no problem, but when he says, I am sorry, I am committed to the Prime Minister and Premiers of this country and I will keep my word and I will vote; I will bring this resolution forward and I will vote to have this resolution passed, but I will not give my caucus a free vote, then, Mr. Speaker, given the fact that there will be some support on this side, then what is the point of the hearings? To me, it makes the hearing process a farce, if that was to be the case.

I for one was very concerned that would be the case last week when we began this. I was worried because the Premier (Mr. Filmon) said there would be no free vote, and he also said he was going to push the accord ahead because he had given his word to the Prime Minister and the other Premiers, regardless of the hearings. So the hearings become a sham; the hearings become a mockery. I think it is just an intolerable position. So I believe that, as I said before, if we listen to our constituents and we had a free vote in this Chamber, this accord in my judgment would not pass.

Now, as they said, the main argument for accepting the resolution was that Canada is going to fall apart if we do not approve it, but really, Mr. Speaker, to the credit of Canadians, they just do not buy that argument. In the Free Press of Thursday, June 14, there was an article based on the Angus Reid group's poll asking Canadians various questions about the Meech Lake Accord. The results of this poll stated that the overwhelming majority of Canadians believe Quebec will not be satisfied with the gains made in last week's marathon Meech Lake negotiations. That was one of the observations. It also found that on a number of issues explored, Quebecers and Canadians living elsewhere agree on only one issue, that Quebec will seek further constitutional changes. Virtually four in five Canadians, or 79 percent, living outside of Quebec said they believe Quebec will still not be happy with their position and will make new demands in the future.

The article goes on to say, this attitude was strongest in Ontario and Manitoba, where 85 percent of the

respondents in each province said Quebec will not be satisfied with Meech Lake. In addition, more respondents in Manitoba, 34 percent than anywhere else said that it would probably be better for Quebec to separate.

I do not share that view. I hope that does not happen, and I am not trying to promote it. What I am doing is reading you the results of this survey. In Quebec 67 percent of the poll respondents believe that it will be necessary for Quebec to seek further constitutional changes from the rest of Canada in the future.

Mr. Speaker, this is some very fundamental information that all Members should be aware of. The poll findings showed that relatively few Canadians believe that the failure of the three dissident provinces, Manitoba, New Brunswick and Newfoundland, to ratify the accord by June 23 would pose any threat to the country's unity. In other words, the vast bulk of Canadians said that if those three provinces held out—and I guess it would be for any one province to hold out—that this would not pose a threat to the unity of Canada.

I just make one other observation from this Angus Reid poll which was just out very recently. Findings from the poll suggest that the Meech Lake debate has left a bad taste in the mouths of Canadians outside of Quebec while Quebecers believe Canadians understand them better now. Mr. Speaker, I commend this article, June 14 in the Free Press, to all Members of the House for study.

I think, Mr. Speaker, we need to have more time particularly to discuss the companion resolution. I know we have had the accord before us for some time, but the fact is that the companion resolution contains a number of suggestions that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) said will take us a long way, and it was the best deal he could get. Frankly in my judgment and in the judgment of some constitutional experts, these additions were simply of no value.

Before I get further into that, Mr. Speaker, the other thing I was concerned about with the process was the fact that the Tories would not have a free vote, which I think is unfortunate for individual Members on that side, I really do. The other thing I was concerned about is the fact that the Attorney General, the Government House Leader (Mr. McCrae), had a referral motion on the Order Paper which would have the committee report to the House before the hearings were completed. I believe the way it was originally worded, the original motion—in fact it was not changed even when it was shown on the reprinted document of Monday—showed that the resolution indicated that the special committee to be set up for the hearings would come back to the House for Tuesday, I think it was June 19, which means in effect if that motion had been approved let us say last week, that the committee would not have to hear all of the delegations, could hear maybe 100 or 200 and then come back to the House, make their report and the vote could be taken.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that would be unfair. I would trust that the Government would not follow through on that. There is nothing in our rules—and this is an

important thing. A lot of people think we have to hear every delegation, but in our rules we do not have to hear every delegation. In the rule book of the Legislative Chamber it says that there shall be public hearings. It does not say that we have to hear the entire public. It does not say that if there were 1,000 we have to hear all thousand, or if there were 3,000 we do not have to—if we heard 100 or 200, you could make the argument, well, we have had a cross section, let us come back to the House and vote.

* (1710)

I surely hope that would never have happened, but that could have happened if that motion had passed, Mr. Speaker. If I am wrong on that, maybe the Attorney General or whoever would like to get up and tell me that I am wrong, but that is my reading of that resolution which is still on the Order Paper. I guess it is really out of order because the date still is there, June 19, and, of course, we are past June 19.

The intent was, as far as I could see, go out and have some hearings, hear a number of people, but let us come back and report on Tuesday, and maybe we will want to pass it at that time because we have heard a number of people. That worried me very much because that meant that not all Manitobans—and who knows who would have been left off—would not have been heard, and I think that would have been an injustice. It would have been a great letdown for people. I would hope that would never have happened, but it could have happened. This is the point I am making: it could have happened.

We know, and I do not think this is any surprise, that the citizens in this province, from all the surveys, all the phone calls we received, all the letters we received are, I would say, at least 90 percent opposed to this accord.

The fact is, if it turns out, Mr. Speaker, that we never get to public hearings and that we get, however, to Friday 12:30 and we are still debating this, and that being passed the deadline, because the House normally adjourns at that time, I think the people out there would be very, very happy. They would say fine. The Manitoba Legislature did the right thing; they did not have enough time anyway; they have done the right thing. They have done what 90 percent of the people of Manitoba want them to do, and they would say hallelujah. The Meech Lake Accord died in the Manitoba Legislature because there were enough MLAs who were prepared to get up and debate it and make sure that it was analyzed properly, not with the intent of trying to go against the wishes of the people, but rather with the intent of acceding to the wishes of the people, the wishes of the bulk of the people who do not wish to see the Meech Lake Accord ratified by this Legislature.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I say that if there was a free vote, a purely real bona fide free vote on all sides of this House, both sides of this House, I believe that the MLAs would do the right thing and reflect the feelings and the views of their constituents and defeat this by an overwhelming margin.

I was pleased to note, and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) made reference to this when he was speaking, that

Manitoba's signature had an asterisk on it, that it was subject to public hearings. To me, that is a credit to the Premier, to the delegation, for insisting on it. That I appreciate very much and I applauded when he reminded us that he had done that.

I think, therefore, it should be no surprise as the First Minister himself said, to anyone in Canada who was listening to him, that we had a process in Manitoba that we had to abide by, and therefore we were going to abide by it and we were going to make public hearings or allow public hearings to proceed in accordance with the rules of the House. I was also pleased where he said he would not try to subvert the rules in any way, and that, to me, Mr. Speaker, is to the credit of the Premier of this Legislature.

There are many reasons why the Meech Lake Accord is unacceptable, and I do not know whether I want to go into too many of them at any length. I just wanted to touch upon one or two, because although they have been mentioned many times before, particularly in the task force hearings that were held around this province, it was stated loudly and clearly, but let us remind ourselves, aboriginal recognition and all the issues concerning the aboriginal people which have been very well documented and presented to this House by my colleague, the MLA for Rupertsland (Mr. Harper), which we support 100 percent.

Beyond that, there are these other fundamental problems that we have. The problems that have been put forward so well by the Westman Women's Coalition and indeed by many other women's groups in the Province of Manitoba, who are very, very concerned that the rights of women are being infringed upon by the distinct society clause. I have received many a letter and document from this group of dedicated women and they stated in a very recent letter to me that the Westman Coalition on Equality Rights, in the 1987 Meech Lake Accord—a letter signed by Gladys Worthington, Co-ordinator—that the women continue to have this concern about their rights being affected by the accord.

They say in one document here, women need their Charter rights, and I am quoting here, even with the assistance of the Charter, women in Canada are having an appallingly difficult time obtaining equality with men. These constitutional documents threaten to remove from women the very necessary tool of the Charter. These documents threaten to relegate us to a secondary status from which we will not recover. We know the Supreme Court of Canada will make ultimate decisions for us based upon the Charter, but only upon a Charter which is unimpaired, uncompromised, and unfettered, unquote.

Mr. Speaker, I know if that group had the opportunity to appear—and I know it has applied to appear before the hearings—they can put their case much better than I can present it for them. But this is a legitimate concern that I have on their behalf that I am expressing at this time and, as I said, when the MLA for Rupertsland (Mr. Harper) stood up for the aboriginal people, whether he realized it or not, he was standing up for women's rights. He was also standing up for the rights of multicultural groups in the province, as my colleague,

the MLA for Kildonan (Mr. Cheema) has very well expressed. The Member for Rupertsland stood up for those people as well.

In regard to Senate reform, Mr. Speaker, I share the views of my Leader. I have never been one who has been overly concerned about Senate reform because it always seemed to me to be so impossible, that it could never, ever come about. I have often shared the view with those who said what we need is a Triple A Senate, which is abolish, abolish, abolish. My view is based on the fact that it is an undemocratic organization. It is appointed, and never, except the last year or so, whether it has been two different Parties involved, the Liberal Party dominating the Senate, the Conservative Party dominating the House of Commons in the Government. You have had some conflict, but traditionally and normally the Senate just rubber-stamps whatever the House of Commons does, which probably is all they should do constitutionally because they have not been elected. It is strictly an appointed body, usually appointed for certain various reasons, some of which quite often are of a political nature, political favours and so on, but for whatever reason.

I could be persuaded, I suppose, to go for a Triple E Senate, which is equal, effective, and elected. I could go for that. I could be persuaded if I thought that there was ever a possibility of this ever coming about, but for the life of me, how on earth would you ever get a Triple E Senate with the Meech Lake Accord? You will never get the Meech Lake Accord. These lawyers I was talking to yesterday said, this above everything else is what disturbed them, that they wanted a Triple E Senate and how could you ever get a Triple E Senate if you went for the Meech Lake Accord because every province has a veto and certainly neither Quebec nor Ontario can be expected to undermine their power in the House of Commons by giving up, through the vehicle of the Senate, power so that every one of the 10 provinces will have equal power, effective. When we say effective, we mean power, and why would they ever give that up? It is just not in the cards. It will never happen. So the accord is a betrayal of all those people who dearly wish to have the Triple E Senate, and I can see why they are frustrated, annoyed and definitely opposed.

As a matter of fact I was told by some people outside—I will not quote the names—they are so annoyed and frustrated with what has been happening over the Meech Lake Accord and their great disappointment. They call it the cave-in. They want to set up a new Party in Manitoba. That may happen, Mr. Speaker. That may be a fallout of what has been happening here, or one of the other Parties that are not well-established may rise and may become more powerful. The Reform Party I know is still interested in federal issues, but the CORE Party is still interested in provincial issues and may benefit from this.

The national spending power, this is a matter that is dear to my heart. I believe that the Meech Lake Accord undermines the possibility of future federal initiatives in this area. There is an article by Frances Russell, one of my favourite writers, in the April 25 edition of the Free Press, quoting Professor Jack

London, who did an analysis of the Meech Lake threat to Canadians' daily bread.

Permit me, Mr. Speaker, if I have a few moments. I am not sure how much time I have. Could you let me know? Ten minutes, great, very good, thank you. Seven? Okay, thank you, Sir.

* (1720)

He says, and I agree with him, if I may just quote a couple of paragraphs. This was a presentation he made to the Charest Committee, I believe. He made this presentation, so it is on the record and I am quoting. "The accord's opting-out provision will be assessed in the context of the whole accord which significantly enhances the power of the provinces in a very much decentralized country. The result in my view could be a balkanized Canada exhibiting a patchwork series of inadequate responses to important social and economic needs. The wording of the accord seems to imply the right of any province to opt out of a national program so completely that the initiative could be not undertaken by the federal Government at all in that province, even unilaterally."

It goes on that Jack London warned that Canadians would pay dearly for the decentralization of federal economic power; quoting again: "For me it signals the end of national building and the promise of a just national society."

Mr. Speaker, I just want to interject at this point, the former Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau is saying words to that effect, and I agree with him 100 percent on that observation. You cannot accuse Mr. Trudeau of being anti-Quebec or anti-French.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. London goes on to say the opting-out process would sap Ottawa's political will. "First, Ottawa would not be able to galvanize public opinion by offering a homogeneous national program. Second, it would be unable to show national leadership. Third, it would know that despite providing 50 percent of the cost, it would get none of the political credit, all of which would shower on the provinces. Finally, it would not be able to enforce even the most minimum of federal standards. The federal fiscal weakness envisioned by the Meech Lake Accord would likely inhibit the development of such programs within acceptable ranges. Less clear still is the effect the accord will have on the portability of benefits and programs from province to province."

Well, these are the views of Professor Jack London and I agree with him. I believe that if the Meech Lake Accord had been in place years ago we would have never gotten the national Medicare Program that Canadians enjoy today from coast to coast with one standard.

Mr. Speaker, the last thing we need in this country is a two-tier social welfare system or social security system where one province has a top level and another province, another area of the country, has a secondary level, where the Maritimes and maybe Manitoba, because we are not that rich, will have one category, one level, and Ontario and Alberta and Quebec will

have another category which is richer and which is better. We do not want that. We should not have that. We can look towards further programs in the future, perhaps a universal sickness and accident program. If that should ever come about we should have one standard from coast to coast in this country so all Canadians can benefit from that.

Well, Mr. Speaker, on the distinct society clause I just want to make a couple of comments, which is another key concern. First, I want to say that we must accept Quebec as a distinct society. No one is saying otherwise. Certainly their language, their history, their legal system and their culture all make it unique in a way that no other province in Canada is unique, so let us recognize that. Attempting to deny or qualify this basic fact will simply make real dialogue with Quebecers impossible. The problem we have is that the distinct society is flawed, particularly in two general areas. One, the accord is not merely a political, sociological or cultural statement. It is a legal document which is intended to have an effect on the rights of individuals and the distribution of powers between Governments.

Canadians deserve some answers on what this effect will be and until recently there has been a failure to acknowledge the existence of these questions. I believe this is what Premier Clyde Wells was trying to get across in many of his objections in Ottawa. Leaving these problems to the court is not an acceptable solution, Mr. Speaker. To begin with, I believe it is an abdication of the responsibility of our elected Leaders. Furthermore, recent events have shown that many Canadians are not prepared to accept a judicial solution and all that a court case does is postpone the need for a political decision.

Mr. Speaker, let me go on quickly to the companion accord, because the companion accord, which the Premier brought back from Ottawa, in my judgment is not worth a \$3 bill. To quote Dr. Eugene Forsey, a leading constitutional expert, it is not worth the paper it is written on. He said that the companion accord is "almost totally worthless" and he has written a short analysis on the matter. He says that it leaves the Meech Lake Accord untouched, it gives Quebec everything it has asked for. It does, in the case of New Brunswick, however, give a constitutional guarantee of equality of the English-speaking and French-speaking communities in that province. That is the only new proposal in the whole ball of wax. I am not going to even repeat—well, I can repeat. He says, "This is the only new proposal in the whole caboodle that is worth a tinker's damn." He says that it gives linguistic majorities in the other provinces absolutely nothing except that matters that are of interest to them will be added to the agenda of future conferences. Even this would require either a constitutional amendment or unanimous consent of provincial Premiers.

Mr. Speaker, I am afraid I am running out of time very quickly, but I would refer you to Dr. Forsey's analysis because he tears to shreds the companion document. He says it is as good as a \$3 bill. It is meaningless, it is worthless.

Let me conclude because I have no more time. Mr. Speaker, I sincerely believe that the Meech Lake Accord

as it stands loosens the tie of Confederation east and west. I see it as a companion arrangement to the free trade deal. It is not in the long-run interest of the growth of this country. I say let us start from scratch; let us do it in a democratic process with constituent assemblies where people are involved, where experts are involved from coast to coast, slowly and carefully, and meet everyone's needs, whether they be in Quebec, whether they be the aboriginals, the women, the multicultural groups, or the average Canadian. Let us do this carefully and sincerely and democratically.

Constitutions are around for an awfully long time and this one in particular, which will only allow future amendments with unanimity, which is virtually an impossibility it seems to me, and which is not good for future Constitution making. For all these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I say let us do Canada, Canadians living today, and our sons and daughters and our grandchildren and our great grandchildren a favour and ensure that we have adequate constitutional reform, that we therefore kill the Meech Lake Accord in the Legislature and ensure the survival of Canada as a great country. Thank you.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if there would be agreement to sit beyond six o'clock?

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to sit beyond six o'clock? No? There will be no leave.

The Honourable Member for St. Johns.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (St. Johns): I enter this debate on the Constitution Amendment, 1987, out of a sense of responsibility and obligation. The easy thing to do would have been to keep silent, to avoid entering the fray, to stay away from the political risk, but I cannot do so, Mr. Speaker. I cannot do so and live with myself or continue to represent my constituents with honesty and openness.

We could all sit back. We could all sit back and say, Meech Lake is dead. We will not have to vote, so let us keep silent. Let the electorate draw its own conclusions and let us try and have it both ways. What would that say about our system of representation? Not a heck of a lot. I know that my constituents may not like my position, but I know they would like it even less if I was being less than honest with myself, or if I said I had a vacuum in my heart, in my head, in my soul when it came to the Constitution and the future of our country, or if I stuck my finger to the wind to see which way the wind was blowing.

* (1730)

It has been said by Thomas Merton that we must be true inside, true to ourselves before we can know a truth that is outside of us. Integrity is not a given in everyone's life. It is the result of self-discipline, of inner trust, and a decision to be relentlessly honest in our response to all situations in our lives, and that means we must cultivate risk-taking and we must also cast off fears of rejection and derision. To get to that point, to be relentlessly honest, is not an easy path. Not many

decisions actually are easy. Not many decisions truly hang in the balance with such equal values on both sides that a breath of air might tip it either way. Meech Lake, the Constitution Amendment, 1987, and the companion resolution are no exceptions to that situation.

As my Leader has said so well in the House today, there is no easy answer to the issues before us. There are principled positions on both sides of this enormous question we are dealing with today. That decision placed before us has caused more grief and agony than I have ever seen in my short political lifetime, and I hope it never gets any more difficult than this. I dare say everyone in this Chamber has agonized over this issue. We have all, I assume, had sleepless nights, emotional outbursts. Friendships have been hurt. Conflict has erupted regularly, and beyond that, everywhere in Manitoba, in every part of Manitoba, in every community, in every section of this province, Manitobans are talking about Meech Lake.

There is nothing to compare to the phenomenon that is occurring presently in this province here and now. Manitobans are discussing this issue with fervour, intensity, honesty and emotion. They are addressing this issue in the same way every Member of this Legislature is addressing this issue. In fact, a suggestion was made to me the other day that Manitobans are dealing with this issue so seriously and with such emotion that in the final analysis, once it is all over, we are going to need some kind of mass therapy session to deal with those feelings and those emotions.

All of our decisions emerge out of that agony, that thoughtful process, the weighing of competing principles, the feelings of others, our constituents, our friends, our family. Our decision comes out of our life experiences and our inner voices. That is integrity, and such a display of integrity has been very apparent in this Chamber in this building over the last couple of weeks. I have seen it in my Leader who has agonized, worried and fretted and involved himself in a most difficult process. I have seen it in my Leader together with the other two Leaders in this Chamber who have sacrificed much, given incredible energy and taken some incredible political risks over this very issue.

They have made a decision after weighing all the options and despite the political risks of choosing an agreement that is far less than perfect, far less than up to the aspirations of Manitobans, but they have done so in the context of our country and of national unity.

That integrity I spoke about, Mr. Speaker, I have also seen that integrity in Elijah Harper. Elijah Harper has been absolutely true to himself, to his origins, to his mission, to his purpose as an elected Member of this Assembly. He has been unrelenting in his honesty and unrelenting in his humility. There has been over the last couple of days much discussion about Elijah Harper and the aboriginal movement, and I do not think there is a person in this Chamber or indeed anywhere in Manitoba who does not and cannot recognize the absolute justice of the cause that Elijah is leading up here in this Assembly. There is not a person anywhere who does not see some poetic justice in that movement

and its ability to influence the future direction of this country, Canada.

I have made a decision, Mr. Speaker. I have come to a decision to respect and honour the work of my Leader and the other two Leaders, but I have done so after a great deal of agony and a great deal of inner turmoil, as we all have. I have made the decision after weighing many factors, pondering what my inner voice was telling and considering my background and those factors which influenced me to this point in my life. It certainly is becoming harder and harder to stick to a position of support for an agreement that is, in my opinion and in many other opinions, very, very flawed.

It is harder and harder to stick to that position when we are faced with the most insensitive, uncaring and undemocratic direction from Ottawa and, specifically, Brian Mulroney. Mr. Speaker, the question of process is almost as critical and as fundamental in this debate as the question of substance and the content of Meech Lake and the companion document.

Mr. Speaker, it will come as no surprise to you or any Member in this House that I believe a process as we have seen over the last several years around Meech Lake would not have happened if women had been in charge. That is an opinion that is not held just by myself. I believe in the coming of this crisis more and more individuals are coming to that opinion.

I wanted to quote, Mr. Speaker, from an article that appeared just yesterday in the Free Press by Elizabeth May who makes a similar point. She says: "Regardless of the rights and wrongs of the issues, somehow it left a bad taste in our collective mouth to know that our fundamental document of nationhood would be amended when (and it seemed inevitable given the pressures) a minority of those in the room cracked under the strain No one could have planned such an appalling approach to issues as critical as the rights of women, aboriginal peoples, the status of the territories, not to mention to the recently enshrined principle of minority rights." She goes on to say: "Men, and people in power, tend to develop strategies which 'maximize gain' (winners and losers abound)." She finally says: "Women, and people out of power, develop strategies to 'minimize disaster' (based on co-operation and sharing)."

I think, Mr. Speaker, if those principles of decision-making, the principles of co-operation, of caring, of understanding what others were saying, of respect for differences, of collective decision-making had been adhered to diligently over the last number of years, we would be looking at quite a different package on constitutional change and quite a different opinion from the public at large.

We have seen difficulties with the process from Day One around Meech Lake and the constitutional amendment and the companion resolution. We can refer back to 1987 and the closed meeting of 11 men sitting around a table deciding the future of this country. We can refer to the parliamentary committee hearings in August of 1988, which were criticized vehemently by New Democrats and others across this country for being held in the dead of summer and being so selective about those who could make representation.

* (1740)

We saw the same phenomenon occur with the Charest committee with an outcry particularly from groups here in Manitoba and individuals in Manitoba who were appalled at the selective recruitment of presentations to that committee and the rushed approach to such a critical and difficult matter.

Then that takes us to the meeting in Ottawa. No one can speak more definitively about the tactics, the heavy-handed approach, the insensitivities than our three Leaders who were forced to sit through that grueling week, which must have seemed like an eternity.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, to top it all off, and to make our decisions that much more difficult, we have seen the Prime Minister of this country, Brian Mulroney, throw it in our faces, suggesting that he had planned this kind of heavy-handed approach, this manipulative tactic all along, and that it was a crap shoot and things were being determined by the role of the dice, and finally Senator Lowell Murray's comments suggesting that we, as Manitobans, consider dropping our parliamentary procedures, our democratic processes here in this province.

None of that makes us feel any better about the decisions we have to make and the choices that are before us. If we could do it all over again, regardless of whether 50 percent of the players were women or not, I think we would be doing it a lot differently.

As I said, all of us come to this debate and make decisions based on a number of things, based on our inner feelings, based on those things which have influenced us over a good number of years. Elijah, the Member for Rupertsland, when he speaks, has spoken from the heart and has listened to his inner voice and is reflecting his life experiences in this Legislature.

I must do the same. I must do the same, Mr. Speaker, and my life experiences and my inner voices, although putting me in a terrible quandary and giving me no easy answers, are pointing me in the direction of saying, the final decision I must make when in doubt is the unity of this country. My life experiences are much different than the Member for Rupertsland (Mr. Harper). I was exposed at a formative part in my life to the turmoil and the uproar in Quebec, the late 1960s and the early '70s, the time in my life when I was developing my political opinions and assessing my values and approaches to life. I have no hesitation in saying to this Chamber and to Manitobans that the kind of imprint on my life at that point certainly has influenced what I must do in the final analysis.

I have also been influenced, Mr. Speaker, by my long-time involvement in the New Democratic Party, in a party that has over many, many years addressed the issue of Quebec's position within Confederation and has talked since its founding in 1961 of some way, of some tool, some policy, to recognize the distinct society that Quebec is.

Nous avons travaillé durement à mettre en application notre philosophie dans un pays en un monde constamment en mouvement. Comme le monde, nos politiques doivent évoluer. Nous les Néo-démocrates

avons été le premier parti fédéral à affirmer que la spécificité du Québec devrait être reconnue dans la Constitution dans le Canada moderne. Nous l'avons fait à notre congrès de fondation en 1961. Nos adversaires politiques n'ont pas manqué la chance de critiquer sévèrement notre position. Toutefois, depuis quelques années tous les partis fédéraux du Canada ont vu l'utilité de transformer l'inévitable en souhaitable. Hormis quelques exceptions, les leaders des différents paliers politiques au Canada comprennent maintenant que la réalité du Québec en tant que seule juridiction en Amérique du Nord où la culture et la langue sont françaises, doit être reconnue dans la Constitution. Cette spécificité du Québec devrait être perçue comme un joyau spécial de notre couronne constitutionnelle.

(Translation)

Address the issue of Quebec's position within Confederation and has talked since its founding in 1961 of some way, of some tool, some policy, to recognize the distinct society that Quebec is.

We worked hard to put our philosophy into action in a country in a constantly changing world. Like the world, our policies must evolve. We New Democrats were the first federal party to affirm that the specificity of Quebec should be recognized in modern Canada's Constitution. We did so at our founding congress in 1961. Our political adversaries did not miss the opportunity to criticize this position severely. However, for some years now all the federal Parties of Canada have seen the usefulness of transforming the inevitable into the desirable. A few exceptions aside, the leaders at all political levels in Canada now understand that the reality of Quebec, as the only jurisdiction in North America where the language and culture are French, must be recognized in the Constitution. This specificity of Quebec should be perceived as a special jewel in our constitutional crown.

(English)

Mr. Speaker, yes, that direction and that position which is rooted in the history and efforts of our Party is also a factor in my decision, and I cannot in the final analysis wipe that clean from the slate. The New Democratic Party fight has also been constant over the last several years to seek changes to the Constitutional Amendment, 1987, that would address some concerns and beliefs of our Party that are as fundamental as the question of Quebec in our Constitution.

Mr. Speaker, it is clearly on record that our efforts to ensure the equality provisions in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms are paramount and override any other aspect in our Canadian life. Our efforts to recognize and ensure that our Constitution recognize not only the founding two-nations concept of our country but our first people, the aboriginal people of this country, and the ethnocultural diversity of Canada. Our efforts have been unrelenting over the last several years to seek changes to ensure that the question of federal spending powers and the ability of national Governments to provide universal programs of national standards right across this country not be jeopardized; and the list goes on.

* (1750)

So our position is clear. If we had the best of all worlds, Mr. Speaker, we would have the best of all constitutional arrangements. We would have a package that recognized the aims and aspirations of the Province of Quebec and our French-Canadian population, but also at the same time clearly recognized the equality provisions for women, the focus on our ethnocultural diversity, and, above all, the quest and the search for justice and fairness by our aboriginal community. The fight to get the best failed, failed even though all three Parties and all three Party leaders tried everything in their power to get the best.

So it came down to a decision, Mr. Speaker, of taking it or leaving it, something versus nothing. I know that there are many questions about whether or not nothing is better than something, but for me that leaves a nagging doubt, a nagging doubt about what that will mean in the final analysis for our country Canada as we know it today. I have to then ask myself, can I live with a Canada that is divided? Can I live with the possibility that our best efforts have failed and we are faced with a division and a separation of this country? I cannot live with that notion, and I cannot live with the feeling that something we may have done or not done may have hurt this country to the point where it is not Canada as we know it today.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that when it comes to dealing with our Constitution and our Canadian constitutional family, it is very much as we deal with family issues and family matters on a personal and day-to-day basis. We do everything possible to seek peace in the family, to compromise, to give, to take, to share and care, so I believe in the final analysis that is what we must do if given no other choice when it comes to the Canadian constitutional family.

I guess I come back to the words of someone who did influence my life in my formative years, the words of Hugh MacLennan in "Two Solitudes" who said, "Love consists in this, that two solitudes protect and touch and greet each other."

Mr. Speaker, those words, that direction, puts me in the final position of having to support something that is very flawed, far from meeting the aspirations of Manitobans, and leaves us many challenges ahead, but it has also been said that out of a crisis comes the opportunity for rebirth. I think whatever happens over the next few days or the next few weeks or the next few months, we have a challenge that must be met by all of us together—a new approach to constitutional development in this country, a new process that involves all people.

Mr. Speaker, I end with some words actually that inspire me, but do make my choices more difficult, but I think in the final analysis they have to be taken into account in this decision. The words first come from—

I am sure everyone here has glanced at this book—it is called "Hooray for Canada" by Carol Ferguson, who wrote an article called "Once Upon a Prairie Childhood." She writes that this country is a many splendored gift. It is like one of those enormous, alluringly wrapped packages that when opened reveals another, even better, inside; then another and another, until you get to something very special at the centre. Every nook and cranny of Canada is a gift feast for the senses. It offers us a bounty of flavours at our tables, a colourful tapestry of literature and art, incredible natural beauty and vast, quiet spaces, and best of all, the wings to fly and eyes to see it all. My country calms me and excites me, comforts me and delights me. I am passionately nationalistic and hopelessly romantic about it.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that is probably a little of what I am, because if I am faced with that decision, the outcome of which has the possibility of tearing our country apart, then I must make my decision to ensure everything possible for national unity and the country Canada as we know it today.

I also see, as I just said, a responsibility is very weighty before us today in terms of addressing the concerns that are outstanding and living up and fighting for the objectives that were outlined in the companion resolution. Out of this Meech Lake crisis is our chance for rebirth, a rebirth that truly recognizes the needs and aspirations and rights of our aboriginal community, an obligation that truly recognizes and acts upon our beliefs in equality between all people of all races, sexes, origins, religions, backgrounds, and a belief that brings our definition of Canada into the modern century, a belief and a principle that says, Canada is our two founding nations, it is our original people of this country and it is our ethnocultural diversity.

I end, Mr. Speaker, by using the words of Daniel Webster actually, surprising in a debate on Canadian politics, but they forever hold me in good stead: "Let our object be our country, our whole country, and nothing but our country, and by the blessing of God may that country be a vast and splendid monument, not of oppression and terror, but of wisdom, of peace and of liberty, upon which the world may gaze with admiration forever."

Mr. Elijah Harper (Rupert's Land): I wish to speak, but can I call it six o'clock?

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it six o'clock? Agreed.

This matter will remain standing in the name of the Honourable Member for Rupert's Land.

The hour being 6 p.m., this House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Thursday).