

Speech by Robert Bourassa, Prime Minister of Québec, delivered at the Québec National Assembly upon the rejection of the Meech Lake Accord, June 22, 1990.

[Translation]

Please allow me at this time to dwell a few moments on the excellent work that has been accomplished during this first part of the session this year, which has involved several very important legislative pieces for all Quebecers.

Politically speaking, however, we must note that upon the adjournment of this first part, the Meech Lake Accord has not been ratified. Hence, the Québec resolution that was adopted three years ago less one day, no longer has any legal existence. On behalf of all Quebecers, I want to express my deepest disappointment, a disappointment issuing from all the efforts that have been made by various administrations over the past ten years.

Ten years ago, following the referendum on May 20, 1980, the government of Québec, then headed by Mr. Lévesque, made several efforts to reintegrate Québec into the Canadian Constitution. He had demonstrated, if I refer to an expression used by the Head of the Opposition this afternoon, great flexibility, but with an obviously disappointing result, since Québec had been excluded from the Canadian Constitution.

In 1985, we proposed to English Canada conditions that were deemed by all to be moderate and reasonable. On three occasions, we agreed on all these conditions.

In this respect, Mr. President, I want to thank all my colleagues who stood up for Québec. And I wish once more to point out the particular work that was done by the Premier of Ontario, Mr. Peterson.

Last June 9th, we once again signed an agreement. All the first ministers agreed to do everything possible to have the resolution adopted before June 23rd. It is noteworthy that two provinces did not do so and do not intend on doing so.

In 1987, an agreement was reached. Following three changes in government, the signature that has been given by the provinces was not respected. This time again, in 1990, two provinces that had agreed to do everything possible to have the resolution adopted did not respect their commitment. Up until 1985, it was said: "*What does Québec want?*" We clearly expressed what it is that Québec wants. And the entire government team, and I wish to pay tribute to the Minister in charge, the member from Jean-Talon, who performed an extraordinary task in handling this affair with his entire team, everyone in the team...

Hence, since 1985, the question is: "*What does Canada want?*" And we are still waiting for Canada's answer in this respect.

Mr. President, English Canada must clearly understand that, regardless of what is said or done, Québec is today and always will be a society that is distinct, free and able to assume its destiny and development.

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