



**WHAT'S A NICE COUNTRY LIKE US
DOING IN A PLACE LIKE THIS?**

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I do a great deal of travelling and speaking outside of Canada — one of the things that happens when politicians leave office. I commented that some people choose retirement and some people reach retirement age and others have retirement thrust upon them. But one becomes a member of that international coterie of people who go about expressing their opinions, occasionally for very high fees in various international venues. I chose the topic for tonight's speech because it's the question that I'm asked more and more as people around the world — people in the United States and in Europe — look at Canada infinitely puzzled, infinitely perplexed about what it is that's going on in our country. Last summer I received an invitation from the British Broadcasting Corporation to do a radio documentary on Canada. They were going to do a series of three on the old dominions — Australia, Canada and New Zealand — and former prime ministers present them all — Malcolm Fraser has done the one for Australia and David Lange for New Zealand. I welcomed the opportunity and thought, "This would be wonderful." I was told we would start the work at the end of January, and I thought, "That would be great, my book would be done. There won't be time to go on the book tour yet, so I'll have a chance to turn my mind from things in the past, that are part of my memoir, and to look at the present and future."

Then came the October 30th referendum result, and I'll have to tell you that I was in a complete funk. I thought, "What can I tell a British audience about Canada? How do I even begin to explain what it is that's going on in our country? And how do I do so, while at the same time tell people that this is in fact a country where good and interesting things are happening?"

I just returned home this afternoon from two weeks in the

Los Angeles area. Looking through today's papers — I've been away for two weeks and haven't read the news — I see speculation about the possibility of a snap fall election. The truth is it's very difficult to know what to do about the uncertain state that we are in as a country. After two unsuccessful attempts to amend the constitution under the 1982 formula, and the squeaker referendum result in Quebec, we know that whatever our governments do or try to do will come back to us as citizens — either in a general election or in a public constitutional process. So tonight, I'd like to talk about where we are in Canada, and look at some of the illusions and what I call "conventional un-wisdoms" that in my view have gotten in the way of achieving some kind of agreement on a *modus vivendi* that would enable Canadians to continue living together in one united country as we know it today. After looking at what kind of place we are in, and how a nice country like Canada could get there, I'll give you my view of where we might go from here. I should emphasize that these are my views only — I don't speak for the government and I don't speak for any political party. I've left politics; I've now decided that I'm going to be a middle-aged states-person.

Let's look first of all at where we are. The year-end polling in 1995 showed that in fact a majority of Canadians are pessimistic about the survival of Canada as it now is. A number of our leading public opinion researchers have claimed that they've never seen anything like this bleak view before in their study of Canadian public opinion. Interestingly enough, two-thirds of Quebecers said that they thought Quebec would separate, even though only 52% said that they would in fact vote "yes" in another referendum. As for the narrow victory of the "no" side in the referendum, my friend John Dixon wrote recently, "We need to think of a word that does for loss what the word pyrrhic does for victory." The result has settled nothing, the question was fudged. Despite clear statements to the contrary by the federal government, the premiers and Canadian opinion polls, the "yes" side apparently succeeded in convincing Quebecers — especially "yes" voters — that economic and political partnership with Canada was achievable after a "yes" vote and a declaration of sovereignty. There is considerable frustration outside Quebec. Quebecers

have clearly rejected the full sovereignty option, therefore we have the fudged question of the referendum, and the replacement of Jacques Parizeau with Lucien Bouchard to lead the “yes” campaign. But whereas, from the separatist point of view, 50% plus one is decisive for “yes,” it is not decisive for “no,” and so we now speak of the “neverendum” because the separatists have said that they will try again. In public opinion polls, Quebecers have also indicated firm opposition to unilateral moves by their government. They want Quebec to negotiate with the rest of Canada, but the rest of Canada has indicated equally clearly that it’s not keen to open up the constitutional process. If there is going to be any movement at all in the views of Canadians — and I think such movement is essential if we’re going to find some formula for national unity — we must begin to address what I call some “conventional un-wisdoms” underlying our current positions. I want to discuss some of these now.

The first one is the notion that the Canadian economy doesn’t really work as a national economy, that east-west trade could be replaced with north-south trade. We talk a lot in Canada about provincial trade barriers, and certainly when I was in government this was a constant litany: that we had to break down inter-provincial trade barriers, that they were costing Canadians 6 billion dollars a year in lost economic activity. Some of you may know the story of Jacques Parizeau — how he came to have his epiphany which led him to be a separatist. He was finance minister for Quebec and was travelling to a meeting of provincial finance ministers in Banff and, somewhere along the prairies — if any of you have travelled by the train along the prairies, one can’t be responsible for what happens to one’s thinking — he suddenly had this revelation and vision that “Aha, Canada doesn’t work as an economy.” This has been a cornerstone position of his own political life. But recent research has shown that, in fact, trade with other provinces is up to 20 times as important as trade with comparable and neighbouring states of the United States.

Recent research by John McCallum of the Royal Bank — research that I first heard about at a conference here at UBC last March from John Helliwell — has made economists sit up and take notice because it flies in the face of conventional wisdom. If you

asked economists how important they thought that interprovincial trade was relative to trade with comparable states, they would have said, "Oh maybe three to one, six to one." The fact that new databases from Statistics Canada enabled economists to actually measure it, and that the difference was in fact twenty to one has made people realize that we're dealing with something infinitely more significant — an economy much more integrated and much more interdependent than conventional wisdom had led us to believe. Even if we compare ourselves with the European Union, their intra-nation trade is one and a half times as important as between community members. In other words, even where you have an economic union, like the European Union where there has been a concerted effort to eliminate barriers of trade — things that we should be doing with our inter-provincial trade barriers — there is still a greater significance of the trade within a country. It's still one and a half times as important as trade even with neighbouring countries in the community.

Not only is inter-provincial trade of goods and services significantly more important than trade outside, of all provinces, Quebec is the most dependent on this trade — 23.2% of Quebec's GPP is trade to other provinces, compared to 6.6% for other provinces to Quebec. Quebec and the other provinces comprise two of the world's most inter-dependent trading regions, with more than \$64 billion in bilateral trade in 1993. In 1990, for example, Quebec exported to Nova Scotia and New Brunswick more than to any country in Europe, including France. It exported more to Newfoundland than to Japan — Canada's second largest trading partner — or to France. It exported more to Ontario than to the United States, more to B.C. or Alberta than to the whole of Asia. What this means is that where patterns of trade are concerned, national borders do matter. And if Quebec erects a national border between itself and Canada, this will have serious effects upon the levels of trade, even with the kind of agreement that we've seen between the countries of the European Union.

A second conventional un-wisdom is that an independent Quebec would be more sovereign economically, and that the rest of Canada would not be adversely affected by Quebec's sovereignty.

Suppose Canada and an independent Quebec formed a federation or relationship to retain that international solidarity. To begin with, no such relationship would give us the international stature and weight that a united Canada provides. But assuming that we're going to create such an agreement, what model would we use? Lucien Bouchard has said that if Quebec could have the Maastricht Treaty provisions with Canada, it would be happy; but those provisions would in fact make Quebec less sovereign than it is now. Jacques Parizeau has actually admitted that for some purposes, Quebec is now more sovereign than France. There is also the assumption that Quebec would join NAFTA with all the benefits. Now leaving aside the doubtfulness of that presumption, as a sub-national entity, Quebec may do things in the area of regional economic development that are not permitted to national governments under NAFTA. Quebec would in fact be less sovereign as a separate state under NAFTA. Sovereignty is an elusive concept in the contemporary world. The debate over the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement was largely about the implications of that arrangement for Canada's sovereignty in areas of social policy. There's no such thing as absolute sovereignty for any state today. The ability of states to set their own agendas and rules is compromised by debt, by fiscal realities, by treaties, trade agreements, international laws, and by power in the many ways that this concept can be defined. I would like to suggest that independence for Quebec might well result in a reduction of the sovereignty of the Quebec government.

One of the factors that influences this calculation is the end of the Cold War. Whereas the *realpolitik* of the Cold War suppressed the expression of ethnic nationalism in Europe — where the conflict anticipated by the Cold War antagonisms would have taken place — in Canada just the opposite occurred. As long as the United States was the major player and superpower on one side of the relationship, separatists in Quebec could reassure themselves that the United States would be quick to pull Quebec into its protective embrace. Quebec's strategic position demanded that the regime there be firmly in the western camp. With the end of the Cold War, however, the entire power configuration of the world has changed, and we're still

grappling with the significance of this. The end of the Cold War was such a profound alteration in the frame of reference in which most of today's world leaders have grown up, that it will take a long time before we fully assess its impact, and there is very little we can say for certain about the future of global relations.

Living in the United States in 1994 gave me a close-up view of the enormous ambivalence of that country about what its role should be in the world now. One thing is certain: with the loss of the rationale of containing communism, Americans are much less willing to sacrifice their own economic interests in the interest of solidarity with other countries. It seems to me that in this global context it is very foolish for a country to make the deliberate decision to be small. I don't need to repeat the impact that the division of Canada would have on our relative stature in the world, and our exclusion from many of the international fora where we now participate to the benefit of all Canadians. A small Canada and Quebec would be much more vulnerable to the pressure that already impinges upon the sovereignty of countries. The United States has already warned that quick adhesion to NAFTA should not be counted on. In years to come, the negotiation of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement before the fall of the Berlin Wall may well turn out to be one of the great examples of serendipity for Canada. The United States is a very protectionist country, which is precisely why regimes such as the Free Trade Agreement, and now NAFTA, are so essential.

The real situation is that Quebec is sovereign over virtually all of the areas that are necessary to achieve what separatists claim is the *raison d'être* of an independent Quebec: the protection of the French language and culture. Moreover, the self-determination of Quebecers is twofold: as Quebecers and as Canadians. In the latter identity, Quebecers participate powerfully in a government that adds the resources of a much broader community to the goal of the preservation of the French language and culture. Last March, the *Montreal Gazette* quoted the report of the Montreal Commission on Sovereignty as saying, "Canadian federalism endangers the survival and development of Quebec as a distinct society." The lesson of history, I would suggest, is just the opposite. Then there is the genre of com-

ments that was perhaps most dramatically expressed by Lucien Bouchard when he said, “Canada is not a real country.” I think a lot of Canadians think that somehow other countries have it all figured out, but that Canada is really very diverse and very loosely connected compared to other nations. We’ve all heard our friends say, “We should be a little bit more like the Americans. We don’t want to be quite as jingoistic as they are, but they’re so patriotic and they know who they are. They put their hands over their hearts when they’re singing the anthem and they swear allegiance. And you look at the French and the British — they know what a country is.”

I was very struck a few years ago reading the first volume of Fernand Braudel’s history of France, *L’Identite de la France*, which was his love letter to his country on the occasion of the bicentennial of the French Revolution. He makes the point that, in fact, France actually didn’t gel as the country that we know today until the mid-late nineteenth century, and he talks about all of the divisions there. But Canadians tend to see other countries as being much more cohesive, much more settled, much more established, than we are ourselves. We tend to focus on those things that we think divide us, but the evidence is in fact very different. When I went to the Kennedy School in the spring of 1994, I was teaching a study group on comparative Canadian and American political processes which is a whole other interesting subject. But at the time, Environics had just published a ten-year retrospective poll comparing Canadian and U.S. attitudes. There were marked differences between the two countries. Although there are variations among Canadians, the similarities of attitudes are much closer among Canadians than between Canadians and Americans. B.C. and Quebec are very much alike on some issues; we tend to be more liberal on issues such as supporting choice on abortion. But what is striking, of course, to anyone who sees the country whole is that despite the barriers that geography places to our knowing one another, there are remarkable similarities. We have created a unique Canadian social and political culture whose regional variations are certainly no greater than those found in the United States.

I’ll give you an example that I’ve just learned in my last two

weeks in California. We sometimes think that the Americans have a philosophy of a melting pot and, in Canada, our policy of multiculturalism is contentious. Recently, I was at a conference in Montreal doing the interviews for the BBC documentary and spoke to Neil Bissoondath, who's written a book where he's talked about not wanting to be described as a hyphenated Canadian. But what I discovered in the United States was that because of their very individualistic and litigious approach to things, what they call multiculturalism has actually resulted in 102 languages being taught in bilingual education in the state of California. Somehow or other, the view has been established — I think it's quite contrary to research — that children learn best in their native tongue in their first five years of school. They now have the extraordinary situation where all sorts of various ethnic groups — some willingly and some not willingly — are in fact having their first five years of schooling in a language other than English. This is creating enormous controversy.

But when we look at our approach to multi-culturalism, which we criticize a great deal, it is not designed to be that divisive or fragmenting in Canadian society. If anything, it is designed, whether it succeeds or not, to broaden the mainstream and to reduce the kind of misunderstanding that provides barriers to people taking whatever positions they want in Canadian society. And so we have in Canada developed our own ways of dealing even with the challenge of living in a multi-cultured, multi-ethnic society — ways that distinguish us very strongly from other countries, and our attitudes reveal that.

In Quebec, there is a conventional wisdom that Canadians outside Quebec don't like them very much, and that they're not very emotional. This is, I think, a sad and dangerous illusion. In going through the report of the Citizens' Forum on Canada's Future, what we call the Spicer Commission, I was very interested to see these views expressed in the words of Quebecers. Incidentally, I was interested to see the conclusion of the commissioners about the similarity of values that they found. The reason why I think it's a sad and dangerous illusion is because late in 1995, Angus Reid's polling showed that as Quebecers were preparing to cast their referendum ballots, fully 9 out of 10 Canadians (89%) living outside Quebec

hoped for a “no” vote; over three-quarters (78%) agreed that the thought of Quebec leaving Canada “makes me truly sad,” and three-quarters (76%) disagreed that in the long run both Canada and Quebec would be better off if Quebec just separated. And fully 96% of the respondents agreed that they felt profoundly attached to Canada.

There is also a sad unawareness by Quebecers of the enormous efforts that have taken place over the last 20 years to bring French language education to Canadians outside Quebec, and the number of parents who have voted with their children’s feet in enrolling their children in French immersion school. I say this is a sad and dangerous illusion because, on the one hand, I think that the old notion that somehow there is a deep resentment against French Canadians in the rest of Canada certainly doesn’t apply. I’ll be first to agree that there’s been discrimination; but I think it is a sad misreading when one thinks of the people who took out billboards saying, “My Country Includes Quebec,” and the many people I know who are passionately committed to the equality of the linguistic communities in Canada. But it’s also a dangerous illusion because it suggests that when Jacques Parizeau says we can easily negotiate an *entente* — a political and economic agreement — with the rest of Canada, it ignores the passionate feelings that Canadians have and how passionately angry, upset and distressed they would feel if faced with the prospect of a divided Canada. They will feel much like rejected suitors, and I think the failure to understand that however stoic anglos may appear on one level, there is a deep passion and a deep attachment to Canada in the rest of the country will lead to a very dangerous miscalculation very, very detrimental to the kind of outcome that the separatists promise.

I think one of the most interesting misconceptions about the whole debate of Canadian unity is the use of the metaphor of divorce to describe what a separation of Quebec from Canada would be. A common argument made by separatists is that what they are seeking from the rest of Canada is simply an amicable divorce, or a “velvet” divorce. People in the rest of Canada also often use that metaphor to describe the division of Canada. Now I’ll leave for now the question of whether in the context of family breakdown amicable divorces

really do exist, and take the metaphor at face value. It is a very appealing way to render benign the break-up of a country. It communicates an image of two individuals who in a mature fashion recognize that they can no longer be happy together and agree to sever the legal ties between them while remaining, hopefully, friends. Underlying this, of course, is the darker notion of the inherent cruelty of binding someone to a marital relationship that has become intolerable. While one partner may not wish the separation, the law recognizes the right of the unhappy spouse to break the tie. In this no-fault approach to divorce, even the initiating partner is entitled to the protection of his or her share of the marital assets through a fair division of property. The partners then go their own ways, supposedly to live more authentically and fulfillingly on their own. If one partner fares worse than the other, unable to form a successful new relationship or financially burdened by the increased cost of raising children or paying alimony, well too bad, it's no concern of the other.

Appealing as this metaphor may be for making the notion of Quebec separatism seem unthreatening and inherently fair, it is completely inappropriate. The separation of Quebec from Canada would not be a divorce. It would constitute a dismemberment. A failure to understand the crucial difference will lead to a tragic misreading of all that could and would follow such an attempt. Canada and Quebec are not two separate entities that can be separated by tearing along the dotted line: Quebec is both the creator of and the creation of Canada. Canada's most fundamental characteristics are a reflection of the presence of Quebec as part of the country. Similarly, Quebec's very existence — socially, linguistically, and territorially — derives from its being part of Canada. I don't need to repeat for this audience the issues relating to the position of aboriginal peoples in Quebec, or the status of the northern territories if Quebec were to separate, but they are not unrelated to another aspect of the divorce metaphor that must be examined more closely.

In the case of a divorce, the will of each party is indivisible; that is, whatever the parties think or feel, and even if they have proverbial mixed feelings, their decisions are their own. In Quebec, the

will of the province is not indivisible. Laval University political scientist, Jean Pierre Derriennic, points out that if the separation of Quebec takes place, there would be anywhere from 25% to 45% of the inhabitants who would be discontented or angry at no longer living in Canada. He says their dissatisfaction will be for the new state, a problem much more serious than is the problem today for Canada of the dissatisfaction of Quebec separatists. On either side of the divide, a separation of Quebec would be wrenching, divisive, and destructive if one takes into account that 27% of married anglophones in Quebec are married to francophones; if one looks at the growing number of Quebecois French surnames in the telephone directory of any major Canadian city, including Vancouver. If one stops to reflect on the fact that the unhappy 25% to 45% that Derriennic talks about would be people whose citizenship in a country which 83% of Quebecers recently identified in a poll as the best country in the world in which to live was arbitrarily cancelled, you can begin to envision the emotional trauma that would be visited upon Quebec society and be reflected in similar feeling in the rest of Canada.

The panacea of dual citizenship which is held out by the separatists to mitigate the reality of separation is a chimera. Even if Quebecers who applied were to be granted such dual citizenship by Canada — a highly doubtful proposition, one that an overwhelmingly majority of Canadians have said that they would not support in the case of separation — it would in fact mean very little because it's residency, not citizenship, that confers social benefits or the right to vote. Such citizenship might be of some use to a Quebecer who then wished to move to Canada, but it would be of no or marginal use to the dual citizen who remained in Quebec. The most likely effect would be simply to require the dual citizenship holder to file income tax returns in both countries. Because Canada and Quebec are integral parts of one another, there is no legal framework even to consider the possibility of separation. The metaphor of divorce suggests an accepted set of criteria and mechanisms to adjudicate the inevitable disputes over property, custody, and other disentanglements. It is not orneriness on the part of the federal gov-

ernment or other governments in Canada that makes this so difficult. Our constitution does not contemplate the separation of a province, because while provincial governments are the repositories of certain sovereign powers, the provinces themselves, as opposed to their governments, are integral parts of the larger whole, which is Canada. Nor does international law provide any basis or support for such a step. In short, the characterization of a separation of Quebec from Canada as a divorce is a total misrepresentation of the nature of the parties to such a transaction, the impact of separation on the interests and lives of Canadians, the legal right to take such a course, the mechanisms available to implement such a division and, as a result, the possibility of accomplishing a separation while maintaining a friendly relationship.

One of the other major illusions of the debate on the future of Quebec and the future of Canada which is not a matter of language as such is the notion that a “yes” result in a referendum would put an end to the uncertainty and tentativeness that has plagued Canada and Quebec over the last 30 years. We have called this the “waiting for the other shoe to drop” approach to national unity. When separatists say that they will not take “no” for an answer, as indeed they did on October 30, that they will continue to struggle, the message is clear — you can be rid of these troublesome Quebecers once and for all if we vote to separate. Now I’ve already indicated that separation is not a simple process like a divorce, but it’s also absurd to believe that triggering a process of separation will make life simpler for Canadians, including Quebecers. I would predict a minimum of ten years of chaos following any serious attempt to detach Quebec from Canada. Now, as a lawyer, I cannot pretend that the employment opportunities offered by such a scenario to members of my esteemed profession are unwelcome. But if Canadians are tired of talk of separation, wait until they try the real thing. I am appalled by the shortsightedness and the naivete of those outside Quebec who say “Let them go.” Every Canadian will pay the price of Quebec’s departure. It is not a matter of getting rid of a troublesome member of the family and getting on with your life. We would all be poorer — economically, socially, and politically.

Recently, we've seen the growth of partitionist sentiment in western Quebec, supported by comments by the Prime Minister and his new Minister for Inter-governmental Affairs. When I was in Montreal doing the interviews for the BBC program, I met with Keith Henderson, head of the Equality Party, who is one of the leading proponents of this movement, and they've been having rallies. There's a very passionate feeling about this, and there's talk about whether there would be ethnic enclaves. Of course, the partitionists say they don't want to partition Quebec, they don't want to separate at all, but perhaps they're simply trying to take the logic of separation to a conclusion that will show its futility. But this debate is the harbinger of the kinds of wrangles that could drag on and poison the atmosphere between Quebec and its neighbours, and among Quebecers themselves in the event of a vote for separation.

Well, this is all pretty bleak, and I certainly don't mean to say that the illusions and the conventional un-wisdoms are confined to Quebec — not at all. In the case of the economy, in the case of the blithe response to the idea "Well, let them go, let's get it resolved," those attitudes can be found in the rest of Canada and certainly in this community as well.

Is there anything positive that we can say in the face of all of this? Well, there are some interesting signs of hope. After the October 30th referendum, a poll showed that 31% of "yes" voters in Quebec agreed with the proposition that they had a profound attachment to Canada. Thirty percent of the "yes" voters polled said that they voted "yes" not to achieve independence, but to give Lucien Bouchard a strong mandate to negotiate a new deal for Quebec within Canada. Twenty-seven percent of the "yes" voters said that they would have been less likely to vote "yes" if it became clear that the rest of Canada was not willing to form a new political and economic partnership with an independent Quebec. We can call these attitudes sort of the soft underbelly of the debate in Quebec, because they do indicate the reality of what I said earlier that Quebecers are not prepared to adopt the pure separatist, sovereignty option. There's a significant consensus both inside and outside Quebec that it is now time to make some substantial changes to the way Canada works. But when we

get to the detail, it gets a bit more difficult, because while there is support for reviewing the division of powers, there is a wide divide between Quebec and the rest of Canada over whether significant powers of the federal government should be devolved to the provinces. There is, I think, a mid-ground that we can begin to tackle now that does not require a constitutional change, and that involves the federal government's role in areas of provincial jurisdiction. I think there's much that we can do that doesn't require us to make those kinds of changes that Canadians can't agree on, but that could begin to respond to some of the concerns that not just Quebec, but other provinces have raised about the relative roles of the two governments.

Further, while we sometimes approach the question of constitutional change with the view that what is needed is to clarify things, I would like to argue that, on the contrary, we should seek to preserve some constructive ambiguity. One of the things that changed the Canadian political culture dramatically in 1982 was the codification of relationships that had up to then been carried on by convention. I think all of us would agree that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms brought a very important new aspect to Canadian law and the protection of Canadian rights, and I feel very strongly that it's a positive thing. But it also unleashed in the country what has been called the "fetish for codification" -- the sense that if you weren't actually written in in black and white that somehow you were disadvantaged. Even though your rights may be protected by analogy, because the Supreme Court of Canada has certainly set out criteria by which it would extend the equality of rights protections, for example, to other groups who are not actually enumerated in the constitution, there still has been this sense that somehow everything must be written in. We saw this taken to its ultimate conclusion in the Charlottetown Accord, which was a document which tried to cover so many different bases that every Canadian who looked at it found some reason not to like it. Instead of saying, "Well I get what I want here and I'm prepared to compromise on the others," they instead said, "Ooh my gosh, we can't possibly do that, even if I get what I want."

There is a lot to be said for exploring the potential of the silence of constitutions. A British political scientist, Michael Foley, actually wrote a book with that title in which he talks about the fact that in political societies you can often have alternative or competing and, in some ways inconsistent, principles that nonetheless co-exist in a society. They can be paradigms or models useful for a variety of purposes, but if you insist on reconciling those differences, and if you insist on saying that “only one of the formulae work” or is really operative, then what you often get as a result is a major constitutional crisis. The examples that he uses are Stuart England and the Nixon presidency. I would like to suggest that we’re facing a similar situation in Canada because one of the things that divides us as a country is the model that we use to describe the Canadian political community. For some, that model is based on the idea of two founding nations. For others, the idea of ten equal provinces is fundamental. Certainly for those who argue the two founding nations theory, the changes to the constitution in 1982 were seen as a loss. I think that what we are living now is the constitutional crisis created by the attempt to resolve that difference and to say once and for all what the model, or paradigm, of the Canadian political community should be.

But in many ways, each of those ideas is an exaggeration. Neither of them is true in detail, but each of them reflects something very important about Canada. Now historians may argue that when the constitution was being drafted that people weren’t actually articulating the notion of two founding nations, but there’s absolutely no question that the existence of the French speaking community in Canada — the French-Catholic community with its system of civil law — was the backdrop against which Canada was designed. We tried unifying Canada-east and Canada-west — it didn’t work. And so it was necessary to create a political structure that would allow for variations within the sub-units to accommodate the cultural goals of our French-speaking community. Sir John A. MacDonald would have liked to create a unitary state, but he recognized that only a federal state would do, and that’s what I mean when I say that the existence of Quebec is fundamental to how we in fact designed ourselves as a country — to how we chose a division of powers.

And so, even though Canada has moved beyond that initial accommodation of French within an English majority country, the notion of two founding nations has some validity to explain why there are certain kinds of aspirations that we find in Quebec, why there are passionate concerns about the future of French, and a sense of being deprived, a sense of having the status of Quebec changed by 1982. Similarly, the notion of the equality of the provinces is important and it does reflect a reality in Canada and, for certain intents and purposes, it ought to be the model that's operative. But I think, in fact, that we don't have to necessarily arm wrestle them to the ground and insist that only one formula works to describe our country. As we look to change the constitutional arrangements in Canada, one of the ideas we have to bear in mind when we come across an ambiguity is — is this an ambiguity that makes life difficult? Is this an ambiguity that presents the possibility of some people being cheated of their rights, or Canadians being disadvantaged? Or is it a constructive ambiguity that will enable a country made up of real flesh and blood human beings, not abstractions, to live together? By resolving that ambiguity, by getting rid of it, will we in fact destroy the very thing that we are trying to preserve by not allowing room for different ways of looking at our society?

I think perhaps the most important task for us to address is the question of what we know about ourselves. As Prime Minister, I reorganized the departments of the government and created the Department of Canadian Heritage to consolidate all federal powers relating to culture, communications, youth, representation of Canada, and post-secondary education, since the provinces have jurisdiction over school education. The Spicer Commission showed clearly the value of exchanges between Canadians, and especially between Quebecers and Canadians from the rest of Canada, in creating mutual understanding. I think we have to focus on making Canadians aware of the pitfalls of some of the conventional un-wisdoms that underlie the national unity debate, but also in telling Canadians about themselves. During the last two weeks that I've been in California, a number of experiences reinforced my belief that we are tragically negligent in this country in educating our children and ourselves about

how our country came to be.

My friend's eighth grade son was preparing for a history test about the American Revolutionary War. Throughout his high school education he can expect to continue the exploration of American history, learning about his country's political institutions and circumstances that gave rise to them. There is nothing even remotely comparable in Canadian education. The professor who teaches Canadian politics at the University of California (Irvine), spoke about the Canadian students who take her course from time to time and how little they know before enrolling. They freely confess to her that her lessons, designed for an American audience and quite elementary in describing the Canadian political system, are a revelation to them. I myself spoke to her class and found the Canadians there as ill-informed as she suggested. A delightful young Quebecer, who was educated in Quebec City, said he knew nothing of the national institutions before arriving in California and was surprised to find how his sense of identity as a Canadian had been reinforced by his travels outside Canada. He was fascinated by the discussions of the constitution and how the legislative process really works, so much so that he sought me out privately to discuss the possibility of going into politics.

We cannot learn what we need to know to exercise our obligations as citizens in just one course, and yet when I was at school that was precisely what we had: one grade eleven course in Canadian geography, history and institutions — Social Studies 30, for some of you who went to school in this province. It was notoriously boring and poorly conceived. It was designed to quell any sense of pride or interest one might have in one's own society. The most that can be said for it was that as a requirement for graduation the torment was experienced by all students. The Spicer Commission identified the same frustration. If you read the report of the Citizens' Forum, over and over people are saying, "We don't know enough about our country." During the Charlottetown Accord campaign, I encountered this many times in discussing the agreement and, in fact, at one point was criticized for quoting the *Macleans* poll that came out after the referendum of 1992 which indicated that there was a

direct and strong relationship between the level of education and the likelihood of voting “yes.” Now that isn’t simply a question of whether people are informed or not about their society, it can also have a great deal to do with whether people who feel empowered are more likely to take a risk in constitutional change than people who do not feel empowered. But there is no question that Canadians don’t feel that they know enough about their country, and they’re frustrated by it and feel angry about it.

When I met with President Clinton in 1993, I told him that I was free-trader, but a cultural protectionist. In my view, protecting the ability of Canadians to experience the reflection of their own reality in their own voices was our national defence. There is every reason to believe, however, that American pressures on our cultural industries will become more intense, both through anti-protectionist measures and increasingly pervasive technologies. The bulwark that will ultimately determine whether we grow up with any appreciation of just what it means to be Canadian is our education system. And while things are not as bad now as in my own public schooling, at least in some places, we are still woefully deficient.

Well, what can we say of all this? I think all of us want to do whatever we can to keep Canada together, and in a way that all Canadians can rejoice in. I do not believe that any process devised by our leaders will succeed without changes in the way Canadians themselves think. I haven’t said much about the myths underlying the ideology of humiliation that fuel so much of separatism in Quebec. The reality is that those of us outside Quebec who would like to challenge it are not persuasive on the subject in Quebec. We can say a great deal to Quebecers about how we think and feel about the country, but Quebecers themselves, and especially francophone Quebecers, will have to take on that challenge. Some former separatists have already begun to do so, and all federalists there will have to enter that debate. But I think we must all examine what we feel and think, and commit to trying to understand the many ways one can experience this country.

Reading the report of the Citizens’ Forum on Canada’s Future would actually be a good place to start. Every time I look at it I

am struck by what an extraordinary resource it is — 400,000 Canadians expressed their views in that process. It was the most extensive consultative process ever carried out in Canada, and possibly in a democracy. And while it's not scientific in the same way that public opinion polling may be, it is a wonderful picture of Canadian society and how Canadians in all parts of the country feel about it, and where the areas of agreement are. I think it would be very difficult for someone to read that document and not come away feeling that they've learned a great deal about their fellow Canadians when they may not have had a chance to meet them. I'm also intrigued by the recommendations that the Citizens' Forum made, that the forum itself become a continuous process in Canada, but not one sponsored by government. This is not to say that we have no ways of talking to one another, but at this stage in our history, perhaps we should focus on finding ways to learn the truth about ourselves and renew that kind of process.

In my BBC program, I concluded that perhaps the Canadian national identity is to be always searching for that identity. Rather than being complacent and self-satisfied about who we are, we are perhaps more like the wanderer in constant search for the meaning of life. What I do think is ineluctably true is that we are a country, not a collection of pieces like a jigsaw puzzle. If it seems that never before have Canadians been more uncertain about the future of their country, a knowledge of our history might reassure us that in fact there were some who in the early days thought that Canada would be still-born. There are no guarantees in this world. And nice countries, like nice guys, just might, as Vince Lombardi thought, finish last. But I think that if we can sweep away the myths and illusions and learn to accept that we can't survive if we insist on only one way of understanding this community, and if that would then lead us to refuse to allow the perfect to drive out the good, I think we can give the cause of Canada our best shot. I began tonight with the proposition that whatever our governments try to do will come back to each and every one of us as citizens finally to decide. I have no idea how this will all end, but I do know that we have to start some place. And that place is ourselves.